

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

DECLARATION

I, SHEENA GEORGE, hereby declare that the following thesis entitled "Celebration of Aboriginality Through Theatre of Hybridisation: An Analysis of the Plays of Jack Davis" submitted to the University of Calicut, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is an original record of studies and bonafide research carried out by me during 1999-2003 under the guidance of Dr. M. DASAN, Professor and Head, Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Kannur University, Thalassery Campus, and that it has not previously formed the basis, either in full or in part, for the award of any degree or diploma.

Place: *Calicut*

Date: *30/3/2003*

Sheena

SHEENA GEORGE

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

Dr. M. DASAN,
Professor and Head,
Institute of English and Foreign Languages,
Kannur University, Thalassery Campus.

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, "Celebration of Aboriginality through Theatre of Hybridisation: An Analysis of the Plays of Jack Davis" submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, is an original record of studies and bonafide research carried out by SHEENA GEORGE, during 1999-2003 under my guidance and that it has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree or diploma.

Place: *Calicut*

Date: *30/3/2003*



Prof. Dr. M. DASAN

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

FOREWORD

Drama has always fascinated me and so I did not have to think twice about choosing the genre for my research. However, it was a Refresher Course in "Folklore" co-ordinated by Prof. Raghavan Payanad at the Academic Staff College, University of Calicut in 1995, discussions with my guide Dr. M. Dasan and with the academics I had met at the international conference of Asian Association for the Study of Australia held at Trivandrum in 1996 that helped me to narrow down the area to Australian Aboriginal Literature.

This thesis "Celebration of Aboriginality through Theatre of Hybridization: An Analysis of the Plays of Jack Davis" looks at Australian Aboriginal literature as a 40,000 year old phenomenon. Aboriginal Writing in English, which is a comparatively recent development, is a continuation of this long tradition. It is a literature of the "Fourth World", has striking similarities with other "Black Writings" and is a post-colonial manifestation. In the introductory chapter of the thesis I have tried to place Aboriginal Writing in English in this context and to delineate its distinctive characteristics. By tracing the evolving concept of Aboriginality, the Aboriginal views of history and their political engagement, Aboriginal writing is shown to be a means for as well as a celebration of survival. Jack Davis is a pioneer in the resurgence and

continuation of Nyoongah culture and in the Black Australian dramatic revolution.

Chapter 1 entitled "The Aborigine and Literature" is divided into three sections. The first section deals with Aboriginal oral literature/history, which apart from recording myths and legends of origin and describing the Aboriginal way of life, also gives an account of the visitors to their land. With the European invasion, Aborigines were marginalised and ignored and were re-presented in white writings. Meanwhile oral literature continued. In the second section instances of the representation of the Aborigine by white Australian writers, starting from exploration literature to the poetry, fiction and theatre of the 1970's, when Aboriginal writing itself came into focus is looked at and in the third, the development and flowering of Aboriginal writing in English, which firmly anchored to Aboriginality, presents images of contemporary Aboriginal experience.

In "Aboriginal Drama: From Ritual to Theatre", the second chapter an attempt is made to trace the development from ritual and aesthetic expression to dramatic performances, drama and theatre. Jack Davis is one of the first published of Australian Aboriginal playwrights and he celebrates the Aboriginal voices of Australia. By fusing Aboriginal oral culture and western dramatic forms he deals with current Aboriginal concerns. He uses the elements of oral culture to foreground a largely

ignored Aboriginal past and to emphasize the presence and contributions of the Aborigines of Australia. He also shows the changes in the *Nyoongah* way of life by hybridising many experiences. Hence a definition of Jack Davis's "Theatre of Hybridisation" is attempted in this chapter. Moreover, as important dimensions of meaning are located in conditions of production, reception and circulation of a work of art and as Jack Davis himself has stated that his plays "were all written for a reason," (Shoemaker 25) these contexts are also looked into.

The Aboriginal version of history is foregrounded in the plays of Jack Davis and this is examined in the third chapter "The Real Australian Story". *Kullark, No Sugar, The Dreamers, Barungin* and *In Our Town* together present an epic of Aboriginal history. By effectively incorporating versions of *Nyoongah* history and white history in his plays, enabling both to exist and co-exist, he not only shows how the Aboriginal condition has been shaped, but reinstates the presence of Aborigines in history.

In Chapter four, the various ways in which Davis's plays interrogate/challenge the assumptions of colonialism are analysed. Differing views on the issue of land, law and justice and Christianity are examined together with instances of subversion and Self/ Other dichotomy.

The techniques used by him to stage history and resistance are the subject of study in the fifth chapter. Verbal and non-verbal trajectories of

drama are deployed with great ingenuity in his plays and these include song, dance and the traditional modes of story telling -- essential features of Aboriginal heritage and culture. The Aboriginal sense of place and displacement, tendency towards subversion, a distinctive Aboriginal view of time-space relationship, ethics, metaphysics and aesthetics presented in his plays, together constitute an altogether new dramatic genre that certainly lie far outside the domain of Australian mainstream culture.

A comprehensive bibliography is included in the thesis.

This thesis has been documented in accordance with the guidelines provided by the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, by Joseph Gibaldi, 5th Ed.

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe my sincere gratitude to Dr. M. Dasan, Professor and Head of the Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Kannur University, for his scholarly and inspiring guidance. He had patiently gone through the various versions of the manuscript with critical suggestions and had provided valuable reference books.

My thanks to Dr. Sankaran Ravindran, the Head of the Department of English, University of Calicut, for his encouragement and advice, Dr. N. Ramachandran Nair, who was the Head of the Department of English, University of Calicut during the period of my UGC fellowship, for all the help he has extended to me, to Dr. R. Viswanathan, Professor, Department of English, University of Calicut, for his keen involvement and encouragement, and to all the members of the English Department.

I am indebted to Dr. Dennis Haskel, Director, Centre for Studies in Australian literature, University of Western Australia, and to Dr. Gerry Turcotte, Director, Centre for Australian and Canadian Studies, University of Wollongong, for making available useful material on Jack Davis. Thanks are also due to Dr. Sue Green, Director, Aboriginal Research and Resource Centre, University of New South Wales for her guidance in the choice of reference books.

I would like to record my debt to the libraries and their Staff for their cooperation and assistance. I am particularly obliged to the English

Department Library and the C.H.M.K General Library of the University of Calicut, the Aboriginal Research and Resource Centre and the General Library of the University of New South Wales, Sydney, the Louis Mathieson Library of Monash University, Melbourne and to the Library of St. Joseph's College for Women, Alleppey.

I am also grateful to my uncles Mr. Neville Kunnel and Mr. Clarence Kunnel at Melbourne, and to Mr. Bay Marshall of Sydney for their hospitality and help during my visit to Australia.

I sincerely thank the authorities of my College, and my colleagues in the Department for their understanding and help. I also place on record my acknowledgement of the award of the fellowship under the Faculty Improvement Programme of the UGC, which helped me in the completion of the research.

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Prof. Dr. George V. Andrews and Prof. Ivy George Andrews, in appreciation of their invaluable help. I am what I am because of them.

Mr. P.L. Antony and Mrs. Lilly Joseph, my parents in law have been extremely supportive during the whole period of my research and it was the unstinting support, encouragement and assistance from my husband Mr. Jerald P.A. that made this venture possible. I also gratefully acknowledge the patience and interest shown by my sons, Neville and Edwin throughout my pursuit of this project.

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

CONTENTS

Foreword		i
Acknowledgements		v
	INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter I	THE ABORIGINE AND LITERATURE	48
Chapter II	ABORIGINAL DRAMA: FROM RITUAL TO PERFORMANCE	103
Chapter III	THE REAL AUSTRALIAN STORY	160
Chapter IV	INTERROGATING COLONIAL ASSUMPTIONS	206
Chapter V	STAGING HISTORY AND RESISTANCE	249
	CONCLUSION	301
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	318

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

INTRODUCTION

The process of interaction/confrontation between different cultures, resulting from British imperial rule, led to the development of a large number of varieties of English language and to literatures written in English outside the British Isles. These literatures have been variously defined and labelled:

[. . .] politically, [. . .] as Commonwealth or national literatures such as Australian, New Zealand or Canadian literature; ethnically and/or geographically as African, Caribbean or Pacific literature; linguistically as World Literature written in English; and historically as New Literatures in English or 'post-colonial' literatures. (Reimenschneider 271-72)

"However," as Reimenschneider observes, "the parameters of nation and language, of race, region or history have all proved inadequate for a distinctive description of the totality and the relatedness of discrete new literatures in English" (272). Aboriginal literature is a seminal area in Australian literature. Since it is produced outside the British Isles, Aboriginal literature written in English is also part of World Literature written in English. It is a part of the New Literatures written in English due to its comparatively recent development since the 1960s and also forms part of the Post-colonial Literatures written in English as it reflects

the political, linguistic and cultural experience of colonisation/ European imperial domination.

In Australia, as in countries like Canada, and New Zealand, “cultural imposition associated with colonialism” (Hutcheon 171) resulted in the annihilation or marginalisation of the indigenous culture and people. However, as Hutcheon points out in respect of “Native and Metis writers,” the indigenous people all over the world, “are today demanding a voice (Cuthand; Armstrong; Campbell) and perhaps, given their articulations of the damage to Indian culture and people done by the colonizers [. . .] and the process of colonization, theirs should be considered the resisting, post-colonial voice [. . .].” According to her the best model is that of Helen Tiffin in whose opinion “the aboriginal writing should be read as standing in what Richard Terdiman calls a counter-discursive relation to the settler literature, just as that settler literature stands counter-discursively against the imperial culture” (Hutcheon 172). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, while dealing with the “ ‘dominated’ and ‘dominating’ ” model of post-colonial literatures, state that “Aboriginal writing provides an excellent example of a dominated literature, while that of White Australia has characteristics of a dominating one [. . .]. However, this is “dominated in its turn by a relationship with Britain and English literature” (*The Empire Writes Back* 32).

As Colin Johnson [Mudrooroo Narogin], the most prominent and internationally known Aboriginal critic/writer maintains in one of his articles "White Forms, Aboriginal Content"

Aborigines do not occupy a unique position in this world. They are just one of the many peoples that became immersed in the European flood which flowed out from the fifteenth century onwards. The Aboriginal response to this threatened drowning has been and is similar to that of many other peoples. (21)

But as a literature "of the indigenous minorities submerged in a surrounding majority and governed by them" Mudrooroo feels that Australian Aboriginal literature "must be compared to similar literatures" and not to the majority literature. He calls Australian Aboriginal Literature "a literature of the Fourth World" (28).

The term "Fourth World", as Noel Dyck explains, has been employed to refer to a range of different phenomena. He points out that, according to Graburn, it has been variously applied to victims of group oppression, economically indigent or "basket case" nations and to the imprisoned, the poor, the sick, the elderly and underaged in America, that McCall applies the term to "nations without states," and that Worsley reports a distinctive use of the term by the Chinese (25). The notion of a Fourth World of minority indigenous peoples encompassed within modern nation-states was popularised by native leaders

(especially George Manuel, former president of the National Brotherhood of Canada), and have been receiving increased national and international attention in recent years. Dyck maintains:

aboriginal populations in [different] parts of the world are struggling variously to retain traditional lands, to cope with government administration of their affairs and to survive as culturally distinct peoples within nation-states. These peoples are, by and large, politically weak, economically marginal and culturally stigmatized members of the national societies that have overtaken them and their lands. Together, they comprise what has, in the past decade, come to be known as the 'Fourth World'. (1)

It includes the Indians and Inuits of North America, the Lapps (Saami) of Scandinavia, some Africans, the Ainu of Japan, Maori of New Zealand, Aborigines of Australia, tribal groups in India, some of the peoples of New Guinea, the Indian peoples of Central and South America, and indigenous minorities within the U.S.S.R. In Seton's opinion, six thousand to nine thousand " 'internationally unrecognized nations' " of the Fourth World represent " 'a third of the world's population' " and continue "to resist the encroachment of the 192 [. . .] recognized states."

Dyck makes a distinction between ethnic minorities, Third World and Fourth world peoples. He says that "unlike other ethnic minorities,

Fourth World peoples are not immigrants but the original inhabitants of lands that today form the territories of nation states” and that “unlike the peoples of the Third World who can at least hope to take control of their countries one day through strength of numbers, the tiny internal colonies that make up the Fourth World are fated always to be minority populations in their own lands” (1).

These Aboriginal peoples, who have been “subjected to government policies, that from one country to another, range from genocide to forced assimilation, from segregation to cultural pluralism” (1) have developed various forms of indirect and symbolic opposition, since direct resistance to government policies and attitudes have proved fruitless. They include different types of “cultural conservatism, reinforced by passive resistance and strategies of indirect competition [. . .] that asserted the dignity and value of an Indigenous community and culture” (10). A “deep sense of grievance and injustice” makes them remarkably persistent and committed to their community, identity and culture. And for their survival as aboriginal communities it is imperative that they “discover effective means of articulating their interests” (239). Australian Aborigines, Norwegian Saami and Canadian Indians formed the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) based on the recognition of a commonality of their experiences. There has also developed a World Indigenous Movement with connections all over the world (Dyck).

“Black Writing”, which according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, “proceeds from the idea of race as a major feature of economic and political discrimination [. . .], draws together writers in the African diaspora”; and the classification might be extended to include, Polynesian, Melanesian, or Australian Aboriginal writing (20). The conference on Black Literatures held at the University of Queensland in June 1986, placed Australian Aboriginal and South Pacific literatures along with literatures of the African Diaspora. While Professor Ron Baxter Miller, who noted “common structures” among various black experiences cautioned against considering it as a monolith, Professor Lemuel Johnson, a scholar in African literary studies opined that the term “Aboriginality” can be used as a “general term to discuss the experiences and literature of all black peoples of the world” (Nelson, *Connections* 2). In his introduction to *Connections: Essays on Black Literatures*, Emmanuel S. Nelson argues that a shared colonial heritage of “defeat, dispossession and denigration” and the “debilitating psychological and cultural consequences” link various black experiences around the world (3). As Black literatures articulate those experiences, he points out similarities in the themes dealt with – “searching for cultural wholeness, forging a healing and liberating sense of self, seeking strength in community, reconstructing the past, subverting white texts, recreating rituals and ceremonies, celebrating blackness” – and in the problems faced by black writers: “reconciling their artistic and political

responsibilities, containing their black realities in a Western linguistic medium, articulating their non-European sensibilities through largely European aesthetic forms, managing the complex demands and expectations of their audiences" (4). Roberta Sykes describes Black writers as "the public sounds of our community weeping" (*Connections* 112). The vibrant tradition of protest, the close connection between activism and creative writing, a rewriting of history and the preponderance of autobiographical narratives, are seen to be common to all black literatures. In spite of the variety of similarities Nelson cautions that vast historical, political, linguistic and cultural differences do exist, which shape their literary traditions (3).

Aboriginal literature as described by Mudrooroo "begins as a cry from the heart directed at the whiteman. [. . .] a cry for justice and for [. . .] understanding" (1) [. . .] devoted to an Aboriginal existential being in [. . .] a multicultural Australia" (*Writing from the Fringe* 2). He explains that it arises from the different communities -- Nangas (South Australia), Nyungars (South-Western Australia), Yamadjis (mid-Western Australia), Murris (Queensland), Kooris (New South Wales & Victoria), Yolngus (Arnhem Land), Anangu (Central Australia), Wonghi (eastern Western Australia) and other regional and local groups making up the totality of people placed under the white term "Aboriginal"/Indigenous (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 5). As Hodge and Mishra points out, Aboriginal people have not been passive victims of White cultural practices but have

always had their discursive regimes and systems of control, which maintained their political and social identity. The traditional society with sacred knowledges carefully encoded and protected by those with the right to know, was well suited to maintaining “an invisible continuity between past and present, making sense of the new in terms of the old, holding a people together against all that the enemy could do while concealing from them that this was being done” (72).

In “White Forms, Aboriginal Content” Mudrooroo also maintains that Aboriginal culture has modified and changed in response to new experiences and knowledge.

Aboriginal culture (or cultures) alone is (are) indigenous and rooted in the soil. They, like every other cultures on the globe, are subject to change and are changing constantly. I want to emphasize that such a thing as a stone age culture (static and unchanging), is a myth [. . .]. All societies and cultures change and adapt, and this is fact not theory. (21)

In his opinion, Aboriginal writing is a white form in that it is mostly written in English (28). Aboriginal writers do not necessarily betray their Aboriginality by adapting to and taking over aspects of white cultural forms. They see continuities in what they do (Davis et al 2)

Hodge and Mishra, defines Aboriginal discourse as a range of forms “which is anchored to Aboriginality both in the past (through understood derivation from Aboriginal forms) and in the present (through

Aboriginal ownership and agency)" (75). They too point out that contemporary Aboriginal culture is not a self-contained set of forms, but a complex product of the Australian colonial process acting on earlier forms of life and culture. Produced against the background of overt racism and "Aboriginalism" it has survived only by "a massive subterranean continuity across periods" (71). As they go on to point out, Aboriginal literature and culture "incorporates texts and modes of thought from the extremes of a spectrum that runs from preliterate, pre-industrial social forms to contemporary electronic, post-industrial mass societies," and together with the process of transformation form a single complex which is a major component of world literature and culture (72).

Adopting a term from horticulture, which refers to the cross-breeding of two species by grafting or cross-pollination to form a third, "hybrid" species, Post-Colonial theorists refer to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization, as "hybridity". Hybridisation may be linguistic, cultural, political, racial etc.

Hybridity had formed part of the colonialist discourse of racism -- in negative accounts of the union of disparate races, implying "that unless actively and persistently cultivated, such hybrids would inevitably revert to their 'primitive' stock". However, Mikhail Bakhtin used it to suggest the "descriptive and transfiguring power of multivocal language and situations, and by extension, of multivocal narratives." His hybridity intentionally "sets different points of view against each other in a

conflictual structure, which retains 'a certain elemental organic energy and openendedness' " (*Key Concepts*).

According to Bhabha, the production of meaning in the relations of two systems require a "Third Space" -- a space in which, cultural meanings and identities always contain the traces of other meanings and identities. This in-between space is the space of hybridity. He also articulated the potential of hybridity to reverse "the structures of domination on the colonial situation" by transforming it into "an active moment of challenge and resistance against a dominant colonial power depriving the imposed imperialist culture, not only of the authority that it has for so long imposed politically, often through violence, but even of its own claims to authenticity" (qtd. in *Key Concepts*). Thus the theories of the hybrid nature of post-colonial culture assert a different model for resistance, locating this in the subversive counter-discursive practices implicit in the colonial ambivalence itself and so undermining the very basis on which imperialist and colonialist discourse raises its claims of superiority. Bhabha even suggests that it may eventually "open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. Throughout this thesis I use the term hybrid as described by Bhabha.

The idea of hybridity also underlies expressions of syncreticity, cultural synergy and transculturation. Ethnographers use the term

transculturation to describe how subordinated or marginalized groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture. While syncreticism identifies “the fusion of two distinct traditions to produce a new and distinctive whole” (*Key Concepts* 229), Synergy, refers to the product of two (or more) forces, variously contributing to a new and complex cultural formation, that is reducible to neither” (299). It “emphasizes the positive and energetic aspects of the process of transculturation and the equal but different elements that the various historical periods and forces have contributed in forming the modern post-colonial condition (299).

Traditional Aboriginal culture was distinctively oral. Their narratives “contained a mix of history, mythology, legend, customary law and art [. . .] [which were] characteristic of oral literature in general (including its written forms in other societies -- Homer’s *Iliad*, the Bible and the *Ramayana*)” (qtd. in Hodge and Mishra 76).

Realism, though presumed to be unaboriginal, did exist in traditional culture, although it had a different place in the economy of forms. Traditional Aborigines possessed an extraordinarily precise knowledge of their territory and an ability to read signs in the landscape that were invisible to Whites. Aborigines decoded the abstract forms of Aboriginal art and myths with reference to highly detailed realist texts, which were mediated through both speech (kinds of commentary) and action (rituals and acts of demonstration). Moreover, Aboriginal realist

texts are always structured by an underlying abstract text which encodes Aboriginal meanings and the metameaning of Aboriginality itself; just as Aboriginal formalist texts always encode concrete realities of Aboriginal social life (Hodge and Mishra 77).

According to the Aboriginalist doctrine of the “Dreamtime” it was believed that Aborigines divided time into two layers, “secular time (in which present and past merge into one) and “dreamtime” (a period outside time, before time, describing events which have as much, and as little, reality in the present as ever in the past)” (101) and this made an interest in history, unaboriginal. But Aboriginal society has its own versions of history. While the white versions of history, transmitted through the education system failed to record the role of the Aborigines in the development of the nation, Aboriginal literature representing the oral tradition contained hundreds of local histories handed down through the families, which is “cumulatively damning of the inhumanity and injustice of Australian ‘development’ ” (qtd. in Hodge and Mishra 102). Aboriginal writers have displayed an intense interest in “what really happened” and contest the dominant version of history through “different classes of document, different modes of interpretation, and different grand narratives” (Hodge and Mishra 102). Most important of all is Jack Davis with his series of plays, *Kullark/The Dreamers* (1982), *No Sugar* (1986), and *Barungin* (1989) addressing the full scope of contact history.

Many Aboriginal texts directly deal with the fundamental issues

facing Aboriginal people and by adapting traditional Aboriginal ways, give meaning and perspective, direction and hope to their people. Contemporary Aboriginal society had to deal with problems of dispossession, unemployment, imprisonment, poor health and infant mortality, exacerbated by the so-called 'culture of poverty', marked by alcoholism, suicide and social disintegration and is torn between alienation and a sense of belonging. Aboriginal cultural forms which have always had two crucial social functions – "to interpret, reflect, report, and comment on social life, and to actively construct forms of social existence, ensuring social cohesion and flexibility in responding to the major problems facing Aboriginal people" (73) -- have encoded in them specific meanings through which Aborigines make sense of what seems to outsiders to be the overwhelming meaninglessness of much of Aboriginal life and also the kinds of solutions that have emerged from within Aboriginal society (74). Since Aborigines still are the oppressed minority in need of social justice, "the texts of Aboriginal literature and culture have an important role to play in the process of constructing policies that are sensitive to the needs and values of Aborigines" (Hodge and Mishra 73).

Mudrooroo also claims that Aboriginal literature does not exist in an aesthetic vacuum but within the context of indigenous affairs and hence must be seen holistically within a cultural, historical and social context (*Indigenous Literature* 4). What Michael M. Thelwell, the

Jamaican novelist says of the African Novel holds good for Aboriginal writing in general, that:

[. . .] it is, [. . .] predicated on the assumption that there is a future for which to struggle; that conditions however grim are not beyond the reach of the people's decency, will and intelligence and that the writing and reading of such novels are not only testament to that faith, but *an integral part of that struggle*.

An honest African novel seeks to contribute to a peoples' evolving perceptions of their historical and cultural identity and the shared sense of national purpose. To the extent it is successful it will in part create its audience. This is a challenge and an honour denied contemporary western writers [. . .].

Finally an 'honest' novel about Africa seeks to make a contribution to the evolving form and to the content and purposes of a vital and modern tradition of African literature. It does not seek to latch onto the tail end of a moribund and thoroughly discredited colonial tradition which serves only to exploit and mutilate those cultures for frivolous, if not sinister purposes. (qtd. in Johnson 28)

Aboriginal political activism and Aboriginal imaginative literature are closely connected (Watego, *Connections* 5). As H.C. Coombs observes

Aboriginal involvement in the campaign for a positive outcome to the 1967 Referendum and Aboriginal activism resulted in the emergence of an Aboriginal intelligentsia (*Kullark/The Dreamers* ix-x). At the launching of his book *Kullark/The Dreamers* Davis, who had been in the vanguard of the efforts of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) in the 1960s, spoke of how, Aboriginal activists were planning to ventilate the grievances and aims of black Australians through literature and hoped that his work “is going to help in some regard in making the Aboriginal voice [heard] within the wider Australian society” (qtd. in Watego *Connections* 20). Jack Davis, like most well known Aboriginal writers is “detrribalised, urban, literate, racially aware and politically informed” and was receptive to black American influence (44). The largely successful Afro-American struggle for civil rights provided the Aboriginal Australian with an exemplary model for personal and collective liberation (44) and it was their militant assertiveness that was admired the most. Emmanuel Nelson observes that the influence is primarily psychological and only marginally literary (Nelson, *Westerly* 53).

As a result of the political need to express their contemporary experience, artists who had imbibed European education and ideas, yet had retained their Aboriginal identity and regarded English as their first language produced works which are European in structure, but Aboriginal “in purpose, in content and in style” (Coombs, *Kullark/The*

Dreamers x) and created a growing awareness among non-Aboriginal Australians, of the inequities inflicted on the Aborigines and the need for justice. According to H.C. Coombs Aboriginal texts express “the essence of Aboriginal experience” (x) and are directed not only at Aborigines but also at the Europeans. “It is an invitation as well as a contribution to a debate, a discourse, a mutual search for understanding and respect: a search from which some sense of shared identity may one day come” (x).

Roberta Sykes maintains that she write because it helps her to stay sane (28). “Writing first to react against the definitions that people already have in their minds about what and who we are” (*Writers in Action* 35). According to Cliff Watego, they write not only for sanity’s sake, but “they also write just for survival. And part of survival is being able to articulate some of those inner feelings that we have and being able to share them with people” (*Writers in Action* 34).

In their introduction to *Aboriginal Writing Today*, Davis and Hodge claim that Aboriginal writers have “a sense of purpose, an urgent task on behalf of their community, [. . .] a wealth of material and themes, [. . .] [and] a tradition that goes back millennia before the English literary culture was born” (Davis and Hodge 2). The contemporary indigenous writer analyses the evils which bedevil Aboriginal society seeing it as the result of a historical process; at the same time he also depicts positive aspects like “the human warmth, the spontaneity and humour with which life and its problems are faced” (*Indigenous Literature* 4). The

tradition of Aboriginal culture perceives the artist “as a value creator and integrator” (39). Mudrooroo describes the Aboriginal writer as a “Janus-type symbol, with one face turned to the past and the other to the future while existing in a postmodernity”. According to him, “the past is there only to explain the present and is of utmost importance in that it is the basis of all indigenality” (40). He believes that until Aboriginal people “come to realize that many of their problems are based on a past of oppression [. . .] the self-destructive and community-destructive acts will continue (41). Many indigenous writers see their works as contributing to the task of creating viable indigenous communities from the chaos and passivity that have resulted from oppression and paternalism (*Indigenous Literature* 42).

Since in order to be published the indigenous writer has to make his/her work amenable in style or content to the standards of the publishers, the mere fact of writing and of deciding on a style becomes a political decision (*Indigenous Literature* 41). McGuiness maintains that unless indigenous people control the content, the publishing and the ultimate presentation of the article, it is not indigenous; that it ceases to be indigenous when it is interfered/tampered with, by non-indigenous people who exist outside the spectrum of indigenous life and culture within Australia (*Aboriginal Writing Today* 44) because edited volumes, as pointed out by Mudrooroo reflects the tampering through an absence of political comment and a feeling of outrage or historical understanding (*Indigenous Literature* 47).

Kath walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal) in her opening speech to the Second Indigenous Writers Conference held in Melbourne in November 1983 set down the "BLACK COMMANDMENTS" to be espoused by Aboriginal writers:

1. THOU SHALL GATHER THY SCATTERED PEOPLE TOGETHER.
2. THOU SHALL WORK FOR BLACK LIBERATION.
3. THOU SHALL RESIST ASSIMILATION WITH ALL THY MIGHT.
4. THOU SHALL NOT BECOME A BLACK LIBERAL IN A WHITE SOCIETY.
5. THOU SHALL NOT UPHOLD THE WHITE LIES N A BLACK SOCIETY.
6. THOU SHALL TAKE BACK THE LAND STOLEN FROM THY FOREFATHERS.
7. THOU SHALL MEET WHITE VIOLENCE WITH BLACK VIOLENCE.
8. THOU SHALL REMOVE THYSELF FROM A SICK, WHITE SOCIETY.
9. THOU SHALL FIND PEACE AND HAPPINESS IN A STABLE, BLACK SOCIETY.
10. THOU SHALL THINK BLACK AND ACT BLACK.
11. THOU SHALL BE BLACK ALL THE REST OF THY DAYS. (qtd. in Mudrooroo 38)

And Jack Davis observes that unlike non-Aboriginal writers, “most Aboriginal writers were involved within the Black movement We all started off as political people” (qtd. in *Black words* 187). Mudrooroo in *Aboriginal Writing Today (1985)* compares Aboriginal literature to mainstream literature as follows:

Perhaps the most that can be said for modern Australian literature, or rather current literature, is its utter complacency and the fact that it is becoming more and more irrelevant to the society with which it seeks to deal. Aboriginal literature is and can be more vital in that it is seeking to come to grips with and define a people, the roots of whose culture extend in an unbroken line far back into a past in which English is a recent intrusion (28).

In his book *Indigenous Literature (1997)* Mudrooroo points out a number of differences between Indigenous and mainstream literature. First, he shows that within Australian settler literature the many Indigenous communities and cultures are given a singular totalistic representation as the Other, the Aborigine, with the European settler being the Subject; while in all Aboriginal literature instead of the Subject-Other dichotomy there is simply Subject-Subject. Secondly, he claims that, as opposed to the generalised historical narrative of mainstream literature there are hundreds of localised histories in Aboriginal literature handed down by

families, that these histories are concerned about family relationships, survival and ritual and that they are texts of community empowerment. Thirdly, Mudrooroo points out that instead of the domination of the written discourse of settler literature, Indigenous literature is an oral discourse. It uses different devices such as absence of closure, narrative dominance, epic style, collective authorship and recitation, generic fluidity, repetition, non-verbal and semi-verbal markers and other devices, many of which, he claims, are often edited out when it enters the print culture. Moreover, Aboriginal literature is "inclined to the interpersonal and how things are or were whereas print culture texts [. . .] tend to be about how things ought to be [. . .]" (57).

Literary efforts by Aborigines is characterised by an emphasis on Aboriginality. J.J. Healy in his article "Colin Johnson / Mudrooroo Narogin" published in *International Literature in English* claims that "the whole debate on Aboriginality in the seventies emerged from the unilateral, quite theological imposition by white Australians on all Aborigines -- living, dead, tribal and urban -- of a single umbrella term, Aborigine, with a very distinctive bias of content" (32). The first *Aborigines Protection Act* was legislated in 1869 in Victoria and it defined only the "full bloods" as "real" Aborigines. The *Aborigines Protection Act* 1886 (Victoria) changed the earlier (1869) definition of "Aborigine" to:

full-bloods, half-castes over 34, female half-castes married to Aborigines, the infants of Aborigines and half-castes who

were licensed by the Board of Protection for Aborigines to reside on a station. (qtd. in E. Bourke 38)

The *Queensland Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* 1897 added the following note to the clause defining half-castes: "Offspring of a white woman and Aboriginal father not half-caste" (39) and the 1939 Queensland Act included "a child on a reserve with a mother who is an Aboriginal" (E. Bourke 39). The *South Australian Aborigines Amendment Act* 1939 changed the definition of "Aboriginal" to include all people of Aboriginal descent. It also introduced the "dog-tag" or the exemption certificate, which exempted "[. . .] Aborigines, who, by reason of their character, standard of intelligence, and development are considered to be capable of living in the general community without supervision" (qtd. in E. Bourke 38). But many did not want to lose their identity as an Aboriginal person. Thus, for almost a century, the State Aborigines Acts imposed a biological criteria based on percentages of Aboriginal blood to define Aborigines and there has been no less than sixty seven separate definitions of what constituted an Aboriginal person. These Acts underpinned official and social constructions of Aboriginality.

During the postwar period large numbers of Aboriginal people drifted to urban centres and urban Aboriginal identity came to mean "belonging to an Aboriginal community, identifying as Aboriginal and seeking out new values to blend with a common heritage and a proud tradition" (E. Bourke 40). Though acknowledging loss this meant a

celebration of survival as well. In 1979, Neville Bonner in his maiden speech in the Senate commented:

All persons who desire to be classified as indigenous, regardless of hue of skin and who have flowing in their veins any portion, however small, of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island blood are indigenous people. It does not necessarily follow that the degree of one's emotional scars matches the darkness of personal pigmentation or that the lightness on one's skin necessarily indicates a lessening of knowledge of, and belief in, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island culture and tradition. (qtd. in E. Bourke 46)

The National Report of the Royal Commission for Aboriginal Deaths in Custody reported that Aboriginal people resented non-Aboriginal attempts to define and categorise them. European notions of Aboriginal identity were based mainly on race while Aboriginal people based it on their own cultural heritage, which is inseparable from the land, and their sense of belonging to a specific extended family group -- the sense of "my people". Mudrooroo believed that "[. . .] a search for Aboriginal identity and any conclusions reached must come from us, ourselves . . . We must determine our own identity within the parameters established by us" (qtd. in E. Bourke 42). This is true in the case of all aboriginal peoples. David Suzuki, writing generally about indigenous nations, considered "the sense of self-identification" as "the single most crucial element of

any working definition of indigenous Aboriginal or first peoples" (qtd. in E. Bourke 44). Since the 1930s Aboriginal organisations were formed in response to the various government policies but they were also expressions of Aboriginal identity. They brought to the fore a distinctive Aboriginal cultural heritage and an Aboriginal presence.

Jack Davis, the West Australian born poet and dramatist, was an active member and later the president of the Aboriginal Advancement Council. He was also the state secretary of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. His poems and plays were also expressions of political protest and social comment -- a part of the struggle for a better future. Mudrooroo has rightly pointed out that, it is with the work of people like Jack Davis, who traced the evolving Aboriginal identity, that "there began a movement back, the counterpoint in literature to that of the homelands movement" which he describes as "a homecoming and a re-entry. A return from exile and alienation into Aboriginality" (*Aboriginal Writing* 29).

In the Aboriginal community, the world of theatre and the world of political activism are closely linked together. Jack Davis was a pioneer in the Black Australian dramatic revolution, which has been the most important development in post war Australian drama. He has played a crucial role as a successful exemplar and dramatist. In the 1980s nearly all the Aboriginal plays came from one Australian state and it is

remarkable that Jack Davis and his Swan River (later, Black Swan) Theatre company have been involved with so many of them. The plays of Jack Davis have been critically acclaimed and nationally recognised.

Raymond Williams, in his book *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, introduces the critical term "structure of feeling" to describe the elements in a work for which no external counterparts remain, when one has measured the work against the separable parts. "It is accessible to others -- not by formal argument or by professional skills, on their own, but by direct experience -- a form and a meaning, a feeling and a rhythm -- in the work of art, the play, as a whole" (10). He explains that the structure of feeling is difficult to distinguish while it is still being lived because it has not passed into distinguishable formations and beliefs and institutions and is known primarily as a deep personal feeling to a particular writer (10).

When such a man speaks, in his work, often against what is felt to be the grain of the time, [. . .] established formations will criticize or reject him, but to an increasing number of people he will seem to be speaking for them, for their own deepest sense of life, just because he was speaking for himself. A new structure of feeling is then becoming articulate. (11)

Williams points out that this new way of seeing, leads to the making of

new conventions, new forms. As he suggests the discovery of actual contemporary structures of feeling is the most important kind of attention to the art and society of one's own time (11) and hence my interest in the work of Jack Davis. His art expresses and embodies the effect of a whole lived experience. They are structurally and ideologically unique and celebrate the collective resilience of Aboriginality.

According to Jack Davis, Aboriginality is all about growing up black in Australia. It includes the present as well as the remote past of some 40,000 years of black people. Their history includes the mind-boggling rock art recording the existence of their ancestors, and daily happenings recorded in song and dance around the evening camp fire. It still survives in the Moore River Native Settlement down to the corroboree grounds.

So it is knowing my culture, its vastness, its uniqueness, which makes me proud to be an Aboriginal person. Since the coming of the Europeans, some bad things which are so well known that I don't need to go to the trouble of mentioning them here, have happened to my people. But there are also good things in our lives: the extended family way of looking at life, which binds Aboriginal people together; and the acknowledging of one another even if we are strangers. Amidst the sharing of our joys and sorrows our blackness unites us as one people, one together in our Aboriginality (*Encyclopaedia* 18).

Therefore, Aboriginality is the quality of being Aboriginal and all it encompasses.

Mudrooroo prefers the term "Indigenality" or "maban reality" which he says, "might be characterised by a firm grounding in the reality of the earth or country, together with an acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday reality" (97). He claims that it is "akin to magic realism" (46), that it may be "found in the complex system of mythologies" (97) and that it is "detailed in the oral and dramatic narratives which explain traditional Indigenous reality" (99). Mudrooroo makes a distinction between maban reality and Dreaming. While Dreaming is seen as "an actual state or reality", maban reality is "concerned more with the narrative, the way it [the Dreaming] is encased in language" (101). As "it seeks to establish an Indigenous reality which is counter to the dominant natural reality of the invaders" (100) he considers it political.

Another characteristic of Aboriginal writing is its concern with history. Australian history had been written "by the victor". By taking the act of invasion of 1788 as the founding event and by suppressing the existence of the Aborigines, the foundation myth pivoted around the sufferings and achievements of the pioneers and early settlers. At the interface between the old and the new the power and knowledge of the Aborigines were held in respect since there was survival value in

accurate knowledge and representation. But later, parallel to the repressive government policies, the Aborigines were eliminated as acceptable speakers on any topic and they appeared only on the margins of works in the mainstream of White literature. "Aboriginalism" based on the principle that since the other cannot represent themselves, 'they must therefore be represented by others' flourished, silencing the Aborigines and negating their right to speak on their own behalf (28). Until the referendum in 1967, Aborigines were not classified, as citizens of Australia and "Australian Literature" did not include Aboriginal texts. The genocidal phase, characterized by forced dispossession of Aborigines, brutal crushing of Aboriginal resistance and containment through institutionalisation, was followed by the period of Aboriginal resurgence, which led to an Aboriginal cultural renaissance (Hodge and Mishra 26-31).

Davis and Hodge in their Introduction to *Aboriginal Writing Today* says that "Aboriginal people have been excluded from the pages of white history and denied access to the records of their own people" (5). It is upto the writers "to document and put in order. Who shall tell the story of Noonkanbah, of the Brisbane Protest of 1982, of the various Aboriginal struggles and people who are in the forefront of these struggles but our writers?," (28) asks Mudrooroo. The large body of Aboriginal literature that has emerged has directly challenged the old versions of Australian history and in the process non-Aboriginal constructions of Aboriginality.

Indigenous history may be divided into the following periods.

1 **Pre-invasion:** From the Beginning (The Dreaming) to 1788.

Aboriginal oral records state that they have been in Australia since the beginning, while anthropologists believe them to have walked across the land bridge during the last Ice Age. As the first immigrants they are the original possessors of Australia. Archaeologists have constructed a past of 40,000 years of Aboriginal occupation of Australia. They had been visited by people from Malaya, Indonesia, Holland and France before the British. Estimates of the number of Aboriginal people inhabiting the continent when the British arrived vary. In 1928 Radcliffe-Brown developed the lower estimation of 300,000, while in 1983 Prof. Noel Butlin, geographer and demographer, estimated the population at about a million. It had also been estimated that some 250 languages with up to 600 dialect groups were viable at that time. Hundreds of identifiable nations clearly defined by language, geography, beliefs and descent were also there. A system of education with a strong spiritual base passed on the culture and knowledge of these intricately organised Aboriginal societies, through the ancient oral tradition (E. Bourke 35). The explorer Edward John Eyre wrote in 1845:

The Continent of Australia is so vast and the dialects, customs, and ceremonies of its inhabitants so varied in detail, though so similar in general outline and character, that it will require the lapse of years, and the labours of

many individuals, to detect and exhibit the links which form the chain of connection in the habits and history of tribes so remotely separated; and it will be long before anyone can attempt to give to the world a complete and well-drawn outline of the whole. (qtd. in E. Bourke 36)

2 **The Time of the Invasion(s):** (1788-1901)

In spite of Aboriginal resistance the first settlement in Australia was established in the name of the British Crown in 1788 with the concept of "terra nullius" -- practically unoccupied wasteland. Though early documents prove that it all began with the intention of dealing fairly with the original inhabitants of the land it ended up in their dispossession and destruction. The association of the Aboriginal people with the land was disrupted. Traditional hunting grounds and sacred sites were taken over for sheep and cattle grazing and waterholes were contaminated. Kevin Gilbert in his introduction to *Inside Black Australia: An Anthology of Aboriginal Poetry* (1988) describes how 'dispersion' of Aborigines before claiming the land was legalised by calling upon the rightful owners, the Blacks, three times in the name of the Crown of England, in a language unintelligible to them, and if the Blacks did not immediately surrender, firing upon them; thus ensuring "the historical fiction of 'peaceful settlement'" (xx). Aboriginal attempts to reclaim their land or to interfere with the various practices of European industry, like killing and eating settler's sheep and cattle for survival, met with violent

retaliation. Whites shot Blacks on sight, rode them down with their horses, poisoned their waterholes and massacred them. The *Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia* documents how clans around Botany Bay were pursued by formidable military detachments, a hunting party was attacked by canon fire on the east bank of the Derwent River in 1804 and a large party camped at Pinjarra was decimated in 1834 by a detachment of soldiers and settlers sent out by Governor Stirling from Perth. According to the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crime of Genocide, genocide means:

any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (qtd. in Armitage 6)

Though the term "Genocide" came into existence only after the holocaust

and other Nazi extermination policies, evidently the practice of genocide did exist earlier and white Australia can be found guilty on all points. Kevin Gilbert details some of the atrocities committed by the invaders. He describes how a large mob of Wiradjuri tribe were herded to the swamps, "dispersed" with guns and clubs, their heads were cut off and boiled down in buckets and the skulls were sent to England as curios. He also speaks of Aboriginal skeletons and skulls lying disrespectfully in heaps in state museums around Australia, of tobacco pouches made from dried scrotums of Blacks, of bodies skinned for their cicatrice patterns and pickled. According to him it is directly representative of some of the favourite pastimes of the Whites -- burying live Aboriginal children up to their necks in sand and kicking off the heads to the farthest distance from the body, cutting the throats of Black men and women and making them run till they collapsed and then throwing them, still alive, upon the fire, live children thrown directly into the flames (*Inside Black Australia* xx-xxii).

3 **Protectionism** (1860-1930) Paternalism.

The idea of "protection" of Aboriginal people was spelt out for the first time in the recommendations made by the 1837 House of Commons Select Committee on Aborigines. It included sending in missionaries to convert the Aborigines, the appointment of official protectors to defend them from encroachments by settlers, schooling for their young, and special law for their supervision until such time as they learned to live

within the general community (*Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia* 903). But the period between the 1860s and the First World War saw the utter conquering and control of Indigenous peoples with the framing of restrictive legislation. The protection Acts based on the racial superiority of the British effectively excluded designated Aboriginal people from all aspects of modern Australian life. Aborigines were removed from their own country and families and were herded on to Reserves, and missions organised by various Christian groups. Boards for the Protection of Aborigines had absolute control over the daily lives of Aboriginal people and marriage and movements were subject to permission. These Acts justified discrimination against Aborigines, caused division among them and also facilitated take over of land by the British. They were considered to be a dying race and were excluded from the Commonwealth electoral rolls and from the Census of Australia until the 1960s.

4 **Assimilation:** (1930-97).

Concern about the growing numbers of "Half-castes" led various state governments to adopt policies of assimilation in the 1930s, and it was anthropologist E.P. Elkin who proposed the term to denote absorption of "mixed-bloods" into the general community. One result of this policy was to take Aboriginal children from their families, a practice which continued in all parts of Australia until the 1960s. The cultural assumptions of the assimilationist position is revealed in the attitude of A.O Neville the Commissioner of Native Affairs for Western Australia from

1915-1940:

Here in Western Australia in those early years there was little deliberate cruelty. . . . Indeed much effort was vainly expended in preserving the race in the hope of bringing it to *a useful sort of life, that is to our way of life*. . . . There was no deliberate intention of hurting the blacks, the idea was rather to teach them to behave and become useful. (qtd. in Elder 205)

5 Self-determination and Self-management: (1967-1988)

Government policies imposed without consulting the indigenous population emphasised the powerlessness of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and the failure to recognise the legitimacy of their ideas, views and aspirations. The Aboriginal Movement applied moral and political pressure on the Australian state to right the wrongs of the past. This led to the policy of self-determination, which acknowledged "the right of indigenous Australians to make decisions over their political status as well as their economic, social and cultural development" (Roberts 213). The 1967 referendum, which granted the Aborigines the right to vote and included them in the census, marked the beginning of a new era. Aboriginal issues became a significant part of the national agenda with increased funding for Aboriginal affairs, passing of anti-racial discrimination legislation, establishing the principle of Aboriginal consultation with the constitution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Commission. Issues of Aboriginal sovereignty and autonomy also were brought to the fore.

6 **Reconciliation:** Sharing cultures. (1988-)

The High court decision on the Mabo case acknowledged that Australia was not unoccupied in 1788. In their joint judgment, Justice Deane and Gaudron stated:

The acts and events by which that dispossession in legal theory was carried into practical effect constitute the darkest aspect of the history of this nation. The nation as a whole must remain diminished unless and until there is an acknowledgement of, and retreat from, those past injustices . . . The lands of this continent were not *terra nullius* or 'practically unoccupied in 1788.' (qtd. in C. Bourke and Helen Cox 58)

While the decision set the record straight for many, it doesn't change what happened. Moreover, the courts refused to entertain any concept of Aboriginal sovereignty as it was against their power to question the legitimacy of Australian sovereignty. However, Mabo enables the indigenous Australians to be given justice through the Australian legal system, thus commencing the true process of reconciliation. Paul Keating's 1992 acknowledgement of past injustices to Aborigines is the most detailed statement of its kind from any Australian Prime Minister, which gives the hope of the two groups (indigenous and other

Australians) living together in harmony:

. . . 'It was,' he said 'we [the non-Aborigines] who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases, the alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practiced discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice. As a consequence, we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us'. (qtd. in Carmody 17)

The styles of the writers and the content of their work are influenced by the period of history in which they are situated. Adam Shoemaker in *Black Words, White page*, identifies four Black Australian literary approaches to the past: "the usage of singular and venerable black narrative structures, the attempt to explore the lives of heroic Aboriginal figures of the past, and the revisionist view of Australian history which conveys, for the first time, an Aboriginal interpretation of past events" (130). Jack Davis speaking about the predominance of the theme of past injustice in Aboriginal writing says:

I really think the majority of Australians are just buffoons. They tell us to forgive and forget what's happened in the past. Then, every Anzac day, they glorify their own history. How are we supposed to forget what's happened to us *in*

Australia when White Australians keep on remembering their own violent history elsewhere? Besides, we have a lot more to remember right here. (qtd. in *Black words* 128)

According to Kevin Gilbert:

An onus is on Aboriginal writers to present the evidence of our true situation. In attempting to present the evidence we are furiously attacked by white Australians and white converts, whatever their colour, as 'Going back two hundred years . . . the past is finished . . . !' Yet, cut off a man's leg, kill his mother, rape his land, psychologically attack and keep him in a powerless position each day -- does it not live on in the mind of the victim? Does it not continue to scar and affect the thinking? Deny it, but it still exists. (*Aboriginal Writing Today* 41)

Aboriginal political activism and increased access to the sources of power in Australian society has provided support and impetus to the rewriting of Australian history from an Aboriginal perspective (Hemming 19). The violence of first contact, the dispossession and resistance that followed, the inevitable cultural adaptation and change and the continuing brutality, indifference and institutionalised racism are all subjects of study. Through his works, Jack Davis has played a significant role in the re-writing of history and of Aboriginal Identity.

The theme of the pre-contact past emphasizes "the longevity and

continuity of Aboriginal residence in Australia" (*Black Words* 129), refutes the belief that they do not have a history, and tries to re-establish traditions, territory and forms of cultural expression. The historiography of Aboriginal resistance challenges the myth of Aboriginal passivity -- the suggestion that there was little or no resistance to imperial conquest. The deployment of indigenous forms to enact a historical moment reinforces the validity of local histories and distinguishes them from official, textual documents (Gilbert & Tompkins 110-12).

Jack Davis, one of the first published of Aboriginal Writers has written seven plays (*Kullark/The Dreamers* (1982), *No Sugar* (1986), *Honeyspot* (1987), *Barungin (Smell the Wind)* (1989), *In Our Town* (1992), *Moorli and the Leprechaun* (1994); four books of poetry (*The First-born and Other Poems* (1970), *Jagardoo: Poems from Aboriginal Australia* (1977), *John Pat and Other Poems* (1988), *Black Life: Poems* (1992); and an autobiography *A Boy's Life* (1991). Apart from these he has co-edited two books *Aboriginal Writing Today: Papers from the First National Conference of Aboriginal Writers held in Perth, Western Australia in 1983* (1985), and *Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writing* (1990) and has written a number of articles in various publications. He has also published nine short stories in *Identity*, a journal edited by him in the 1970s.

Born in Perth in March in 1917 Jack Davis grew up in Yarloop a small timber town in Western Australia, as the fourth child of a family of

eleven children. His parents, William Davis and Alice McPhee, were members of the Stolen Generation. Being part-Aboriginal children they were removed from their Aboriginal mothers under the policy of assimilation and were placed in white households (O'Connor). His mother was the daughter of a Scotsman named Rory McPhee and an Aborigine and his father the son of a Sikh called Bung Singh.

Davis has worked as a mill hand, an engine driver, a lay preacher, a boundary rider, a boxer, a horse breaker and a stockman. He has also been a Director of the Aboriginal Centre in Perth, the first chairman of the Aboriginal Lands Trust in Western Australia, a member of the Aboriginal Studies Institute in Canberra, as well as a member of the Aboriginal Arts Board (Turcotte 181). For services to his people Jack Davis received the British Empire Medal in 1977. In 1981 he was named Aboriginal Writer of the Year and became a member of the Aboriginal Arts Board in 1983. In 1985 he became a member of the Order of Australia, received the Sidney Myers Performing Arts Award, an Hon. D.Litt. from Murdoch University and was elected Citizen of the year in Western Australia.

In 1932 at the age of 14 he was sent to the Moore River Aboriginal Settlement supposedly to learn farming skills. The Chief Protector of the Aborigines in Western Australia, A. O. Neville had persuaded Davis senior to send him there with the promise of a job at the end. It was here that he met other Aborigines and witnessed firsthand the stark realities

of Aboriginal existence in white Australia. The farm studies proved non-existent and after nine months he returned home. But the stories told by old Blacks around the fires at night deepened his knowledge of his Aboriginal heritage (O'Connor). His experiences there made an indelible impression on his mind, and form the basis of two of his most important plays, *The Dreamers* and *No Sugar*.

After his father's death Davis went North to Carnarvon and into the business of Kangaroo shooting. Here he had his first encounter with the police. For publicly defying the curfew that forbade Aborigines to appear on the streets after 6 P.M he was first sentenced to one month and then to four months in jail. Luckily for him a sympathetic sergeant had allowed him to serve most of his jail term on a private farm. In Western Australia, which had one of the highest incarceration rates in Australia it was quite easy for an imprisoned Aborigine to die "in suspicious circumstances." This incident (Farmer, O'Connor, Hill) convinced him that direct confrontation with the police was pointless. Instead, he became interested in writing as a means of expression (Davis, *First born* vi) and believed that it is "the one thing which will bring change [. . .]" (qtd. in Turcotte 182) and through his poetry and plays strive to explain their situation to a world wide audience. However, one of his poems "John Pat" and a play *Barungin* is specifically based on the issue of deaths in custody.

During the Second World War he joined the Brookton Aboriginal church, which later led him to the activities of the Aboriginal Advancement Council (AAC), and activism. Christianity is a component of his spiritual beliefs and he believes that Aboriginal Christianity gives his people "a framework of hope and expectation" (Chesson 129). At the same time a critique of Christianity from an Aboriginal point of view is a prominent aspect of his works.

His instinct to write had developed with his parents who were great storytellers. Lewis quotes Davis's observation that at the end of the day, his mother used to describe funny incidents about her children and mime them and that his father used to love singing comic songs. And Jack himself was a highly imaginative child that his mother, who might be the inspiration behind the strongly drawn female characters of his plays, was convinced he would grow up to be a writer (Davis, *First-born*).

English is Davis's first language "My Aboriginal language is my second language" (Turcotte 191). To Berwyn Lewis he had asserted that "Black writers have to make their bread and butter and write in English" and that they wanted people to know about them. As editor of the magazine *Identity* he had become convinced that "a thorough knowledge of the Aboriginal heritage together with a firm grasp of English grammar was an unusual accomplishment" (qtd. in O'Connor) and it is a mastery

of white culture and language combined with patience, wisdom and goodwill that has made him a force in the Aboriginal Movement.

Christianity has been an important site of resistance and Aboriginal responses to it provide examples of cultural change and adaptation, which has been a part of Aboriginal life since the invasion. While some rejected it, many adapted it to fit their particular situations (Hemming 30). *Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writings* (1990) gives an excerpt from the opening prayer by the Reverend Charles Harris, at the protest rally organised at the Bicentenary celebrations:

God of the Dreamtime, you who are with us for these 40,000 years or more before 1788, you who gave us our ceremonies, and the law, and our stories, and our sacred sites. You who gave us our Dreaming, you who gave us this land. You were with us then; you are with us now. [. . .] You were with us through the last 200 years of onslaught, of terrorism, and of apartheid that has been administered to our people in this land. And you have helped us and enabled us to survive through the odds that were against us. We pray that you will avenge your people, the Aboriginal and the Islander people. [. . .] Look and see the chains of oppression that keep your people, [. . .] in bondage. [. . .] Show the people that you are the God of justice and Lord be praised the God of the Dreamtime. [. . .] (Davis et al. 332)

He has incorporated Christian imagery into an Aboriginal framework, without seriously challenging the concepts associated with The Dreaming. This is an excellent example of Aboriginal resistance to, domination by the ideologies brought by the European invaders.

According to Shoemaker, "the power and impressiveness of Aboriginal writing stems from the authors' intimate knowledge of their subjects, their strong belief in what they are accomplishing through literature, and their socio-political involvement and awareness. Above all, [. . .] from their exploration of what it is to be an Aboriginal Australian" (*Black words* 121-22). It is "recognizably distinct from the orature of tribal Aboriginals collected and translated by anthropologists" (Tiffin 156), but draws on a wealth of traditional oral literature and incorporates a range of forms. It has been noticed that Aboriginal people -- Kooris, Murris, Nungas, Nyungars, Yappa, Yolgnu, Anangu -- all share common backgrounds in storytelling and that there is a widespread and unique tradition of ironic humour about the situations in which they find themselves.

With the dominance of English, loss of Aboriginal languages, flood of mass media and commercialism; Aboriginal culture, identity and spirituality are under increasing pressure but it is through participation in modern Australian life that it seeks to develop. Aboriginal literature reflects the change in Aboriginal experiences and identity down the ages.

WORKS CITED

- Armitage, Andrew. *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. 1989. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Bourke, Colin and Helen Cox. "Two Laws: One Land." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 49-64.
- Bourke, Eleanor. "Australia's First Peoples: Identity and Population." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 35-48.
- Coombs, H.C. "An Invitation to Debate." *Kullark/The Dreamers*. 1982. Sydney: Currency Press, 1988. ix-xi.
- Davis, Jack. "Aboriginality." *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*. Ed. David Horton. 2 vols. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994.
- . *A Boy's Life*. Broome: Magabala Books, 1991.
- Davis, Jack and Bob Hodge. Introduction. *Aboriginal Writing Today: Papers from the First National Conference of Aboriginal Writers held in Perth, Western Australia in 1983*. Ed. Jack Davis and Bob

- Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985.
1-6.
- Davis, Jack, Stephen Muecke, Mudrooroo Narogin, and Adam Shoemaker. ed. *Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writings*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990.
- Dyck, Noel. "Aboriginal Peoples and Nation-States: An Introduction to the Analytical Issues." *Indigenous Peoples and the Nation-State: 'Fourth World' Politics in Canada, Australia and Norway*. Ed. Noel Dyck. Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1985.
1-26.
- Elder, Arlene A. "Self, Other, and Post-Historical Identity in Three Plays by Jack Davis." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 25 (1990):
204-15.
- Farmer, Alison. "Chapter and Verse on Life from a Perth Park Bench."
Rev. of *Wahngin Country*, by Jack Davis. Black Swan Theatre Co.
Octagon Theatre, Perth. *Weekend Australian*. 30.Nov. -1 Dec. 1991. 9.
- Foley, Gary et al. "The year of Mourning." *Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writings*. Eds. Davis et al. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990. 320-342.
- Gilbert, Kevin. Introduction. *Inside Black Australia: An Anthology of Black Australian Poetry*. Penguin, 1988. xv-xxiv.
- Healy, J.J. "Colin Johnson/Mudrooroo Narogin." *International Literature in English: Essays on the Major Writers*. Ed. Robert L. Ross. New

- York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1991. 25-35.
- Hemming, Steve. "Changing History: New Images of Aboriginal History." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 17-34.
- Hill, Barry. "The Life that Jack Built." Rev. of *John Pat and Other Poems* by Jack Davis and *Jack Davis: A Life Story* by Keith Chesson. *Age Saturday Extra*. 14 Jan. 1989.1
- "History." *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*. Ed. David Horton. 2 vols. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994.
- Hodge, Bob and Vijay C. Mishra. *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991.
- Hutcheon, Linda. " 'Circling the Downspout of Empire' ". Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Eds. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post -Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991. 167-189.
- "Hybridity." *Key Concepts in Post Colonial Studies*. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Johnson, Colin. "White Forms, Aboriginal Content." *Aboriginal Writing Today: Papers from the First National Conference of Aboriginal Writers held in Perth, Western Australia in 1983*. Ed. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal

- Studies, 1985. 21-33.
- Lewis, Berwyn. "Smelling the Winds of Injustice." Rev. of *Barungin* by Jack Davis. *Weekend Australian* 26-27 Nov. 1988 Magazine 7-8.
- McGuinness, Bruce and Denis Walker. "The Politics of Aboriginal Literature." *Aboriginal Writing Today Papers from the First National Conference of Aboriginal Writers held in Perth, Western Australia in 1983*. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985. 43-54.
- Mudrooroo. *Indigenous Literature of Australia: Milli Milli Wangka*. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1997.
- . *Writing from the Fringe*. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1990.
- Nelson, Emmanuel S. Introduction. ed. *Connections: Essays on Black Literatures*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988. 1-9.
- . "Black America and the Australian Aboriginal Literary Consciousness." *Westerly*. 4.30 (1985): 43-54.
- O' Connor, Mark. "Jack Davis, Master of White Culture." Rev. of *John Pat and Other Poems* by Jack Davis and *Jack Davis: A Life Story* by Keith Chesson. *Weekend Australian*. 26-27 Nov. 1988.
- "Protector of Aborigines." *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*. Ed. David Horton. 2 vols. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994.
- Riemenschneider, Dieter. "Intercultural Exchange between Ethnic Minority and English Language Majority: The Writing of Jack Davis and Witi Ihimaera." *Imagination and the Creative Impulse in the*

- New Literatures in English*. Ed. M.T. Bindella and G.V.Davis. Amsterdam: Rodop, 1993. 271-280.
- Seton, Kathy. "Fourth World Nations in the Era of Globalisation: An Introduction to Contemporary Theorising posed by Indigenous Nations." 7 July 2002. <<http://www.cwis.org/fwj/41/fworld.html>>
- Shoemaker, Adam. *Black Words, White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989.
- Sykes, Roberta and Cliff Watego. "Love Poems and Other Revolutionary Actions." *Writers in Action: The Writer's Choice Evenings*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Currency Press, 1990. 27-41.
- Sykes, Roberta B. "Appendix: Keynote Address to the Conference on Black Literatures." *Connections: Essays on Black Literatures*. Ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988. 111-118.
- Turcotte, Gerry. Ed. *Writer's in Action: The Writer's Choice Evenings*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1990.
- Walder, Dennis. *Post-Colonial Literatures in English* Ul: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.
- Williams, Raymond. *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht: A Critical Account and Revaluation*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968.

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

Chapter I

ABORIGINE AND LITERATURE

A race of people who rose with the sun,
As strong as the sun they had laws,
Traditions co-existing with nature.

The cycle of the sun is likened to the life of man;
The snake is said to bite when the sun
is at its most powerful zenith.

The snake has already bitten.

When the snake bites the sun,
The clan, the man, the sun,
Must sink cooling to its inevitable settings,
Yet, it is said, the sun will rise again. (1-11)

(qtd. in Isaacs 294)

The Aboriginal orator Albert Barunga's words quoted above reflect the Aboriginal people's history of the Australian continent. The white invaders are the snake that swallow the sun causing an eclipse. Yet he is very optimistic about the future of his people.

Australian Aboriginal Oral Literature / History

Australian Aborigines have the longest continuous cultural history in the world. Discussing the generally accepted anthropological theory

concerning their origin Mudrooroo says that they walked “across Indonesia when the seas froze during the last Ice Age and the islands became a single landmass except for one single stretch of water a hundred or so kilometers in width” (*Indigenous Literature* 6). Aboriginal people have important stories of their own which relate original journeys to Australia of men and animals. The myth of the whale and the starfish (Unaipon 33-52) belonging to the Thurrawal people and the story of “The Three Brothers” (Isaacs 13-14) belonging to the Gullibul tribe, tell of the arrival of men to the coast of New South Wales. Wandjuk Marika, O.B.E. of Northern Territory in his Foreword to *Australian Dreaming: 40,000 Years of Aboriginal History* compiled and edited by Jennifer Isaacs says:

In the world today men discuss whether our ancestors came to Australia by land across a land bridge that has now gone, or by boat, across the sea from Asia. Scientists who study faces say we look like some of the Southern Indian people and like some of the hill people of the Celebes. [. . .]

The truth, of course, is that my own people, the Riratjingu, are descended from the great Djankawu who came from the Island of Baralku far across the sea. Our spirits return to Baralku when we die. Djankawu came in his canoe with his two sisters, following the morning star which guided them to the shores of Yelangbara on the eastern coast of Arnhem Land. They walked far across the country following the rain

clouds. When they wanted water they plunged their digging stick into the ground and fresh water flowed. From them we learnt the names of all the creatures on the land and they taught us all our law. (5)

Each Aboriginal group in Australia has its own version of the great stories. By 30,000 B.P. (before the present) there is ample evidence that men were well established throughout the whole of Australia.

Aboriginal oral literature provides accounts of great geological changes. The story of "The flood and the Birdmen" (Isaacs 26) told by Kianoo Tjeemairee of Murinbala tribe speaks of the rising of the seas at the end of the last Ice Age. The story of "The Giant Kadimakara" (Isaacs 16) of Aranda speaks of the fertile plains of Central Australia, now a desert, indicating the great climatic changes that have occurred. "The Story of the Eruption of the Earth and the Waratah" (Isaacs 29-31) talks of volcanic action. These stories contain the essence of truth, much of which can be substantiated by scientific investigation.

Some legends recall huge extinct animals and giant Marsupials of the Pleistocene times -- Ngindyal, (the giant emu), Kurrea, (the giant crocodile), the giant kangaroos -- with fear and awe and rock carvings corroborate the great legends (Isaacs 14-24). Archaeological evidence suggesting the coexistence of Aboriginal people with these animals has been found in a number of places.

Some Aborigines believe that they have been in Australia "from the very beginning of humanity" (*Indigenous Literature* 7) and that the Djanggawul of Arnhem land and the *Three Brothers* of Northern New South Wales are later arrivals. Bill Edwards in his article "Living the Dreaming" has listed the various terms used by the different language groups to refer to the Aboriginal creative epoch commonly known as The Dreaming. According to him the Ngarinyin people in the north-west of Western Australia refer to it as Ungud, the Aranda of Central Australia as Aldjerinya, the Pitjantjatjara of north-west South Australia as Tjukurpa, the Yolngu of north-east Arnhem Land as Wongar, and in the Broome region as Bugari (67). Legends of the Creation era relate the activities of the great spirit beings, who named animals and birds, formed the landscape and invented principal ceremonies.

Our people of the desert in the centre of the continent speak of the Creation period, the Tjukirita time when the land was a flat disc, a vast featureless plain which stretched to the horizon without rivers or hills. But as the ages passed many different giant mythical beings emerged from beneath this crust and wandered about. They had the form of animals, insects, and other creatures, snake, kangaroo, euro, owl, honey ants and termites, yet lived and behaved as men do today. When this time was passed these creatures left their life essence behind them and at various places where they

camped or where an event took place a rock, waterhole, tree, cave or boulder now marks the site, and these natural features are full of this essence, this Kuranita. Our people must preserve these areas for ceremonies or the animals, plants and people cannot survive. (Marika 5)

This illustrates the significance of land in Aboriginal thought in which the land itself is seen as a kind of text, a scripture which each Aborigine learns to read, and rocks, trees or birds are seen as representations of their own beings, sharing the same spiritual essence (Edwards 69).

The paths taken by the Dreaming Ancestors in their amazing journeys which criss-crossed the continent in a maze of tracks is described and laid down in legends, myths and ceremonial song cycles. When moving over vast distances, navigation is accomplished by noting the well-known Dreaming sites along the way. The ancestral routes passed through the hunting territory of many Aboriginal groups, each of which knew only sections of the myth concerning them. Bark paintings represented details of these epic journeys through symbols, lines and dots.

The detailed song poetry associated with the great journeys of the Zebra Finch ancestors remain the sacred core of ceremonial life of the Pitjantjatjara people and little is revealed to outsiders. The story of the blue-tongue lizard man is one of the numerous Dreaming routes which is

remembered in songs and paintings by the Pintube-Anmatjera people to the north of Central Australia today. Others include the travels by the native cat, the kangaroo and the Euro, Djankawu and his sisters, Kunapipi mother, Wandjina, The Rainbow Serpent etc. (Isaacs 87-95). These stories are the foundation of the daily lives and thoughts of the Aboriginal people. It is their own oral history and perhaps reflect the early migration patterns of Aboriginal groups (Isaacs 94, Mudrooroo 8). According to Mudrooroo this clearly shows that "Australia was never a trackless wilderness, a *terra nullis* as once stated by the Invaders" (*Indigenous Literature* 8).

The life of the Ancestral Beings as encoded in Aboriginal Oral literature also contained clear instructions governing the role of men and women, marriage laws, bearing and raising children, food hunting and gathering and distribution of food in the camp. Many Aboriginal stories, using an alternating storytelling pattern (we got up, collected food and went to A. We went to sleep, we got up, collected food and went to B, and so on) indicate their movement from place to place. They function mnemonically to remind or teach people about food-gathering routes and also represent the route followed by an ancestor being (Muecke 30). Since all occupations originated with the totemic ancestors, even in the most mundane tasks, people re-live the events of The Dreaming, and sanctify it. It taught the Aboriginal people to live in harmony with nature

and to behave towards one another, thus setting the pattern of traditional Aboriginal culture, which has survived 40,000 years.

The roots of contemporary Aboriginal spirituality can be traced to these age-old traditions and experiences based on The Dreaming. Edwards quotes Rose to show that "Aboriginal religion leads people into this world and towards an immanent experience of unity in the here and now" (69). Previously referred to as the Dreamtime it was changed to The Dreaming by Prof. Stanner taking into account the fact that the Aboriginal concept of time is cyclical as opposed to the Western concept of linear time. Edwards quotes Stanner, who had to coin a new term "everywhen" to convey the idea: "One cannot 'fix' The Dreaming in time: it was, and is everywhen" (67). It continues in the spiritual lives of Aboriginal people today. The various languages, song-cycles, paintings and rituals left as legacies by the Ancestral Spirit Beings, enable humans to enter into a direct relationship with The Dreaming. "The correct narration of the stories, painting of the symbols, singing of the songs and performance of the rituals is designed to ensure the maintenance of the cosmos and society" (Edwards 71). Hence when the events of the ancient era of Creation are enacted in ceremonies, danced in mime form and chanted to the accompaniment of didgeridoo or clapsticks the performer is believed to become a reincarnation of one of the ancestors participating in the original adventures.

The songs and stories of Northern Arnhem land and the coast of North-Western Australia record the frequent contact of coastal Aboriginals with people from Malaya and Indonesia for centuries before the arrival of the pale skinned balanda, the Europeans (Isaacs 261-77). The Baiini, who appear to have come first, came as families probably in the Creation era as both Djankawu and Lajndjung (spirit ancestors) are recorded to have come across them on their travels. The Baiini women are spoken of in many Yirritja songs, as planting rice, cooking, weaving, dying, fishing, and making armbands and necklets, stitching sails for their boats and caring for their families.

The story of the Macassans is an important part of the Aboriginal history of Northern Australia. The seasonal visits of the Indonesian fishermen in their sailing praus, and their relations with the Aboriginal people over several centuries before Europeans came, are now a part of Aboriginal history recorded in song cycles of Eastern Arnhem land. The praus (sailing ships) used by Macassans are accurately recorded by Aboriginal artists on rock shelters and in bark paintings.

While the approach of the sails of the Maccasser-men was a cause for celebration for the Aborigines of the northern coast of Australia, the white sails of the English ships was the symbol of a gale which was to cross the continent silencing the Aborigines. The views of the Aborigines on the eastern coast, concerning their first encounters with the

Europeans were not recorded. But on other coasts it has become a part of oral history and their descendants can relate today the story of the coming of the white man. Initially the white men were believed to be the spirits of their dead coming back from their journey across the sea to the spirit land. This view was held by the Bibbulmun of the Swan River area of Western Australia, is recorded in the very north of Australia in Cape York, and is reflected in the story told by Daisy Utemura, Mowanjum:

Aboriginal people from many places came to live near the seaside. [. . .]

[. . .] One day when the men went out for turtle eggs and other things, out on the sea they could see something moving. [. . .] They saw people moving inside it, and they were white.

'What are they?' the Aboriginals thought, and others replied that they were Agula, devils. [. . .]. Some of the natives yelled out, 'Kill the white Agula! See if they've got blood in them.' And so it happened. That's how the war started. They fought against one another, they killed some white people, and the white people killed the Aboriginals too. The Aboriginals found out that they were really humans, but they still didn't win. Then the white people took their land and the Dreaming times were forgotten. And so no more

hunting for free food and the water they used to drink out of the rivers and gullies and springs; today and tomorrow were finished. (qtd. in Isaacs 282)

Aboriginal oral history offers a number of such examples of Aborigines reacting against white invaders and draws attention to a universal awareness of illegal dispossession. It includes stories concerning the fighting over cattle and the massacres, and of the spread of diseases, floods and destructive storms often attributed to the vengeance of the Spirit ancestors.

According to Stephen Muecke, Aboriginal oral literature responded to colonialism by fighting back with words, by making stories in order to come to terms with the structure of colonial economy and law and the place Aborigines were supposed to occupy in it; by articulating suffering, by satirising the various figures of the colonial administration and the pastoral industry (28). Legendary or heroic tales have emerged about the people who fought against colonisation and recently the audio-visual media is also being used creatively. Muecke asserts that Oral literature is alive and well, ranging from Radio Redfern in Central Sydney to initiation ceremonies, from the lyrics of country and western songs to the Djanggawul song cycle of Arnhem land (27).

According to Goodwin and Lawson, traditional Aboriginal stories, songs and poems often bring together the sacred, the legendary, the

totemic, the erotic and the local in ways that resist European genre classification (76). They have their appropriate occasions for recital and also their clan ownership. These literary traditions maintain an eternal and intimate association with the land. Different from a European sense of belonging to the land, theirs is a sense of being owned by the land. The practice of stressing the continuity of Aboriginal traditions even in the face of change, is "an attitude [. . .] which contrasts strongly with European modernism and its tendency to celebrate novelty" (Muecke 30).

Much of this literature is lost; the rest remains in the minds of elderly men and women. But those which remain, may be seen as the classical literature of Australia. While Mudrooroo compares it to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (18), Strehlow considers them to be poems along the lines of *Beowulf* (24). In many areas it is too late to collect authentic structures of Indigenous narrative discourse in the original language. As Stephen Muecke points out, kinship, nomadism and the hunter gatherer economy are the basis of the traditional oral forms. These can only be preserved by supporting a whole way of life and by keeping intact the country with its sacred sites (34). Moreover, since 260 Aboriginal languages, exist even today, translation is essential to take Aboriginal literature beyond a very small circulation and Aboriginal Oral Literature has been preserved by translating, transcribing and publishing in the written form. Though no longer oral, the text becomes "readable and culturally valuable in Eurocentric terms" (Toorn 757). T.G.H Strehlow,

ethnologist and missionary, in *The Songs of Central Australia* (1971) extensively deals with Arrenthe oral poetry and Ronald and Catherine Berndt, in *Djanggalgul* (1952) and *Kunapipi* (1951) present songlines of North eastern and North-central Arnhem Land. Their translations have retained traces of the original text. The following extract is from part of *The Djanggalgul Song cycle* translated by Ronald M. Berndt telling the story of the two Djanggalgul Sisters and their Brother travelling from the mythological land of sacred Beings, via the mythological island of Bralgu (the Home of the Eternal Spirits and of departed ancestors), to populate Arnhem Land:

Although I leave Bralgu, I am close to it. I Djanggalgul,
am paddling . . .

Paddling with all the paddles, with their flattened tapering
ends.

Close I am coming, with Bildjiwuraroiju,

Coming along from Bralgu. We splash the water as we
paddle,

paddling wearily,

With Miralaidj, undulating our buttocks as we paddle.

We paddle along through the roaring tide, paddle a long way.

I am paddling along fast, through the rough sea. . .

Beside me is foam from our paddling, and large waves follow
us. (1-8)

And a love song from *The Goulburn Island Cycle* translated by Ronald M. Berndt:

Take clay and coloured ochres, and put them on!
They paint chests and breasts with clay, in water-designs,
Hang round their necks the padded fighting-bags.
They paint themselves, those Goulburn Island people, and
clans

from the Woolen River. . .

They are always there, at the wide expanse of water. . .

They take more clay, for painting the fighting-sticks. . .

Paint on their chests designs of water-snakes. . .

And paint the boomerangs with coloured ochres. . .

Painting the small boomerangs. . .

Calling the invocations. . . all over the country, and at the
place

of the Wawalag sisters. . .

Painting themselves at Milingimbi Point, at the place of
Standing Clouds.

At the place of the Western Clouds, at the place of
Coloured Reflections. . . (1-12)

Though recorded in the twentieth century they are representative of the oral culture that extended back for tens of thousands of years. Strehlow stresses the universality of Arrenthe Song poetry, which he sees

as poetry in its own right and able to stand with other world poetry. He declares: "In point of language, rhythms and forms, Central Australian poetry is highly developed; and themes of which it treats are of universal interest to mankind" and that "a perusal of [. . .] the aboriginal sacred songs of Central Australia will not prove entirely unrewarding to future poets" (qtd. in Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 32).

Heavily Europeanised versions of pre-invasion literature also exist. The genre of "Aboriginal myths in English" consisted of "short and pointless narratives, full of acts of unmotivated sex and violence, with punch-lines consisting of implausible 'just-so' scraps of natural history" (Hodge and Mishra 77). Muecke observes that writers like K. Langloh Parker, Roland Robinson and Bill Harney have translated and summarised, altering the syntax to an English model for written, not spoken, language (32). For example: "Mullian the eaglehawk built himself a home high in a yaraan or white gum-tree. There he lived apart from his tribe, with Moodai the opossum his wife ..." (1953) (qtd. in Muecke 32). But in Paddy Roe's *Gularabulu* (1983) edited by S. Muecke, the Aboriginal narrator's English "has been transcribed precisely, with pauses indicated by the spacings into lines:

Well this fella used to look after the trough he had -
oh he had childrens too-
he had childrens-

he had about five or six children-

and a old lady-

mother for the children-

old man- (qtd. in Muecke 33)

To sum up. prior to European invasion and the colonisation of Australia Aboriginal people's literature took many forms -- from corroborees, cave, bark and body paintings, sand drawings and song cycles to story telling itself. It was an essential means of passing down the law and lineage of each group. Performance traditions were embedded in practices of warfare, religion and education. Sacred ritual provided immense scope for aesthetic expression especially in dramatic performances with stylised posturing and complicated dance movements. Less intense but sometimes almost as elaborate were the non-sacred ceremonies designed for entertainment and relaxation. But oral culture predominated in the pre-colonial period.

Representation of the Aborigine

From 1788, which Aboriginal people call the invasion and non-Aboriginal people call British settlement, "Aborigines were observed through British eyes and culture and put down in British forms. Aboriginal culture became as distorted as others seen through British eyes such as the Irish, African, Indian and Chinese" (Johnson, *Aboriginal*

Writing Today 22). Western constructs of "race", Christian ideology and the development of Social Darwinism have all been influential in the construction of images of Aborigines. According to Terry Goldie, the indigene in literature is a "reified preservation" (4) revealing the ideology and culture of the authors. And the image presented (the signifier) does not lead back to the implied signified, the racial group termed the Aborigine, but rather to other images. According to him, the Aborigine is a semiotic pawn on a chess board controlled by the white signmaker. Yet the individual writer [the signmaker] can move these pawns only within certain prescribed areas; the white and the indigene having clearly limited oppositional moves. So each textual image seems to refer back to those offered before, the positive and negative images being swings of one and the same pendulum (Goldie 4-5).

Eric Wolf, in *Europe and the People Without History* (1982), comments on the creation of "race":

Racial designations, such as 'Indian' or 'Negro', are the common outcome of the subjugation of populations in the course of European Mercantile expansion. The term 'Indian' stands for the conquered populations of the New World, in disregard of any cultural or physical differences among native Americans. (380)

According to Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffins the term "aboriginal" was coined as early as 1667 to describe the indigenous inhabitants of places

encountered by European explorers, adventurers or seamen. It is generally applied to the original or native inhabitants of a country, as opposed to an intrusive conquering race from another area, or colonists and their descendants. 'Aboriginal' with a Capital "A" refers to the Australian Aborigines (*Key Concepts*).

The earliest written consideration of Aborigines, are found in the journals of European exploration in the second half of the eighteenth century (Shoemaker 10). The Dutch officers of the *Arrhem* and *Pera*, which coasted sections of the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1623, related that "the men are barbarians all much alike in build and features, pitch-black and entirely naked [. . .] and what they live on [. . .] [are] certain roots which they dig out from the earth" (qtd. in Frost 468). This cluster of images can be found to be repeated regularly in exploration literature.

In 1623, explorer Jan Carstensz, having landed on a Cape York beach, became alarmed by the behaviour of Aborigines and fired on them, killing some (Goodwin 9). Later in the century, William Dampier, in *A New Voyage Round the World: 1688 (1697)* described the Aborigines he encountered in the north-west coast as "the miserablest People in the world" (303) commented that "setting aside their Humane Shape, they differ but little from Brutes" (303) and seemed surprised that "we could not understand one word that they said" (305). Lieutenant James Cook and Joseph Banks, the natural scientist encountered Aborigines on the

east coast of Australia in 1770. Cook recorded in his journal:

From what I have said of the Natives of New-Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched people upon Earth, but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans; being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary Conveniencies so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in a Tranquility which is not disturb'd by the inequality of Condition: The Earth and sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for life, they covet not Magnificent Houses, Houshold-stuff &ca, they live in a warm and fine Climate and enjoy a very wholesome Air, so that they have very little need of Clothing and this they seem to be fully sencible [sic] of, for many to whome we gave Cloth &ca to, left it carlessly upon the Sea beach and in the woods as a thing they had no manner of use for. (qtd. in Frost 470)

According to Mcleod, even though this was a scientific expedition and its findings were widely disseminated Dampier's image of the Aborigines persisted. He points out that Swift was clearly inspired by Dampier's account when in the final chapter of his *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), he located the Land of Houyhnhnms, near Perth, the capital of Western Australia. Depicting the Yahoos as "very rank [. . .] the stink somewhat

between a weasel and a fox, but much more disagreeable" (259), Swift comments that "I never beheld in all my travels so disagreeable an animal against which I conceived so strong an antipathy [. . .] the ugly monster" (216). In "The Old Bark School" published in 1897 Henry Lawson recalls being taught (200 years later) Dampier's opinion of Australian Aboriginals: "We got little information re[sic] the land that gave us birth; / Save that Captain Cook was killed (and was very likely grilled) / And 'the natives of New Holland are the lowest race on earth' " (26-28).

Watkin Tench, a captain-lieutenant of marines in the First Fleet, in his book *A Complete Account of the Settlement of Port Jackson* (1793) records skirmishes with Aborigines, the capture of one of them Arabanoo, the attempts to "civilize" him and his death in 1789 from small pox. Arabanoo is described as "of a countenance which, under happier circumstances, I thought would display manliness and sensibility" (87) and that "strong liquors he would never taste, turning from them with disgust and abhorrence" (89).

In the *Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Literatures in English*, Alan Frost identifies three forceful images of Aborigines in the narratives of Australian exploration. The first concerns the hostility of tribal Aborigines to the European parties. Thomas Mitchell, Sturt, E.J.Eyre, and Leichhardt harried by Myall blacks; Edmund Kennedy speared when

in sight of the ship that would have rescued him; John Forrest and Warburton also similarly threatened; J.L.Stoke attacked by Northern Blacks; and efforts to burn out Augustus Gregory's camp on Baines River are a few instances.

The second image concerns co-operation between whites and blacks. Aborigines repeatedly pointed out water holes and pasture to Eyre as he struggled across the Nullarbor Plain in 1840-1. The people of the South Alligator River showed Leichhardt's men how to negotiate swamplands, and then fed them. In 1861 inland blacks repeatedly succoured Burke's and Wills' party, and kept John King alive for three months until a search party found him.

Aborigines were present on many of the exploring expeditions. Eyre had Wylie with him, Kennedy had Jackey. In 1844 Harry Brown and Charley accompanied Leichhardt. G.A.Dalrymple had Lt Marlow (of the Native Police) and Cockey with him. Tommy Windich and Jemmy Mungaro accompanied Forrest in 1869; Dick travelled with Giles in 1872 and 1873. Tommy Windich and Tommy Pierre went with Forrest in 1874, Tommy Oldham with Giles in 1875. Their bushcraft, hardiness, and courage were often indispensable to the success of the expeditions. They were invaluable in the search for water and for tracking straying animals and men. In October 1845, two members of Leichhardt's expedition were found by Charley after they had been lost for three days. Thus whites

and blacks were able to come together for survival in the face of the inland's hostility.

The third image emerges out of Cook's *Journals* (1955-67). He considered the accumulation of material wealth as one of the negative aspects of Western Civilization, and his writings reflected a distrust of western industrial society and his fears for the environment. In contrast, the Aborigine is seen as natural freedom, a sign for liberation and as an environmentalist. Terry Goldie quotes Tzvetan Todorov in *The Conquest of America*: "Columbus speaks about the men he sees only because they too, after all, constitute a part of the landscape. His allusions of the inhabitants of the islands always occur amid his notations concerning nature, somewhere between birds and trees" (20) and notes that explorers' narratives often present the indigene as a part of nature. It is very true in the case of the Aborigine. This closeness of the Aborigine to nature leads to their image as the land. Explorers like Cook and Eyre seem to assess the land through the indigene and vice versa. As Said points out in *Orientalism*:

Many of the earliest Oriental amateurs began by welcoming the Orient as a salutary *derangement* of their European habits of mind and spirit. The Orient was overvalued for its pantheism, its spirituality, its stability, its longevity, its primitivity and so forth. [. . .] Yet almost without exception such overesteem was followed by a counterresponse: the

Orient suddenly appeared lamentably under-humanized, antidemocratic, backward, barbaric, and so forth (150).

This is applicable to the Australian Aborigines also.

Influenced by the writings of Rousseau, Cook helped construct the image of the natives as noble savages. The tradition continued till changes in the nature of contact brought about changes in the image of the Aborigine. In most of the frontier areas, there were fictions and rumours of brutality, many of which found their way into diaries, memoirs, letters and histories. This led to a description of the natives as ignoble savages. For government officials, the Aborigines were appropriate subjects for colonisation and civilisation. Arabanoo, Bennelong, Imeerawanyee, and Yagan are examples of individuals singled out for special treatment by white colonialists. When the European missionaries from various Christian denominations arrived in the 1820s they targeted the Aborigines for conversion and represented them as heathen children who needed to be saved. Nineteenth Century Social Darwinism reduced them to the level of sub-humans. For Anthropologists they became objects for study and discussion and notions of superiority stereotyped the Aborigines as simple, primitive, dirty and ugly. As the frontier moved inland, the Aborigines remained where they were, and were soon overtaken by the settlement. Healy quotes Barron Field who noted the position of the Sydney Aborigines twenty-five years after Philip's landing:

They are the Will Wimbles of the colony: the carriers of news and fish; the gossips of the towns; the loungers on the quay, they know everybody; and understand the nature of everybody's business, although they have none of their own but this. (7)

Bungaree in the Sydney of 1820s and Derrimut in Melbourne of the fifties are individual examples.

Until the 1840s Australian poetry and fiction said little about Aboriginal themes or characters. In the 1840s free immigration led to the emergence of a fledgling society with some sense of community and the Aborigine became part of a debate for the first time in the continent. Royal Commissions and official enquiries also brought the Aborigine into public attention (Healy 15). *A Mother's Offering to her Children* (1841) written by "A Lady Long Resident in New South Wales" is the first children's book published in Australia. Its final chapter entitled "Anecdotes of the Aborigines of New South Wales" "casually turns over Aboriginal death as if it were a distant motif in a fairy tale" (Healy xiv). The first novel that depicts extended interaction with Aboriginal people is James Tucker's *Ralph Rashleigh* (1845). It describes the protagonist's four year sojourn as a "white blackfellow" (an escaped convict); the freedom of the Australian Aborigine is presented in contrast to the life of a convict. In this novel, Tucker draws satirical comparisons between the behaviour of Aborigines and white settlers that destabilises racial

stereotypes. But when he rescues two shipwrecked white women however, Ralph willingly returns with them to Sydney, renouncing his identity as a white blackfellow. As Goldie comments, though the indigene was acquired, the white had not been abandoned. Years later Ralph is speared to death while pursuing some Aborigines who had killed a shepherd. His companion finds "his remains [. . .] cruelly maltreated by these blood-thirsty barbarians, whom the mock philanthropy of the age characterises as inoffensive and injured beings" (qtd. in Healy 45). Tucker here reaffirms the colonial stereotypes he had challenged earlier.

Rolf Boldrewood's novels articulate his experiences with the Aborigines of Western Victoria in the forties. In his works the Aborigine is reduced to two categories -- the sentimental faithful servant and the vicious half-caste or black tracker (Healy 59). Boldrewood's *The Squatter's Dream* is, according to Jones "the first novel to state openly that natives had suffered seriously at the hands of the whites" (qtd. in Healy 52). Wildduck, the Aboriginal girl, who is the main subject of the activities of Maud, the missionary like daughter of the station owner is used in this novel as a sentimental decoration. So is Doorival, the faithful servant of Waldrun. The pervasive presence is that of old man Jack, the survivor of the Murdering Lake massacre, who is portrayed as one of the invisible Aborigines who "moved with a displaced bitterness through the various states of Australia" (Healy 55). In his *Robbery Under Arms* (1888) Warrigal, the half-caste servant of Captain Starlight, who "hates, kills,

and moves like a shadow" is depicted as "the sinister archetype of a malignant evil" (Healy 56). From Boldrewood's point of view native treachery added to a knowledge of white civilization makes him the epitome of Aboriginal viciousness.

Rosa Campbell Praed, one of the first Australian writers to have been intimately concerned with the Aborigine from her very childhood, presented in her works, especially *Australian Life: Black and White* (1985) and *My Australian Girlhood* (1902) strongly ambivalent views on them. As a child she was invited to watch a corroboree, which had turned out into a rehearsal of a night attack upon a station and throughout her life she believed that she could have averted the 1857 massacre of the Fraser family of Hornet Bank Station. According to Healy this guilt feeling explained her ambivalence. But Chris Tiffin attributes it to "two separate parts of her experience -- she played with Aboriginal children on the one hand, and on the other lived for a while on a cattle run under fear of Aboriginal attack" (1307). In *Fugitive Anne* (1902), the attitude of Anne towards Kombo, the half-caste boy with whom she grew up and is now her protector reflects this. She feels that as an Aborigine Kombo will be treacherous, while as an individual he will be faithful.

George Gordon McCrae brought out two long poems on Aboriginal subjects in 1867. *Mamba ("The Bright-Eyed"): An Aboriginal Reminiscence* and *The Story of Baladeadro* (1867). He makes use of fragments of

Aboriginal culture to portray the response of the Aboriginal camps to the arrival of white men. According to Healy, *Balladeadro* was "McCrae's trial run to get inside an Aboriginal myth" (86), and in *Mamba* he invents one of his own.

Noble savage lamentations such as Henry Kendall's "The Last of His Tribe" (1863) "moulds the contemporary 'soothe the dying pillow' attitude to the Aborigines, into a haunting and dignified manner" (Tiffin 764)

He crouches, and buries his face on his knees,
And hides in the dark of his hair;
For he cannot look up to the storm-smitten trees,
Or think of the loneliness there--
Of the loss and the loneliness there.

The wallaroos gropes through the tufts of the grass,
And turn to their covers for fear;
But he sits in the ashes and lets them pass
Where the boomerangs sleep with the spear--
With the nullah, the sling, and the spear. (1-10)

The plight of the Aborigines were sympathetically memorialised by Dame Mary Gilmore in "The Waradgery Tribe":

We are the lost who went
Like the cranes, crying;

Hunted, lonely, and spent,

Broken and dying. (qtd. in Mcleod 109)

Harpur's "The Creek of the Four Graves" (1853) speak of indigenous brutality:

And four stark corpses, plundered to the skin

And brutally mutilated, seemed to stare,

With frozen eyeballs up into the pale

Round countenance of the moon. (279-282)

but he also deplores the mistreatment of the Aborigine by settlers in poems like "An Aboriginal Mother's Lament":

Still farther would I fly, my child,

To make thee safer yet,

From the unsparing white man,

With his dread hand murder-wet. (qtd. in Healy 92)

Healy notes that, "the Aborigine was locked into the efforts of Australians to define themselves" (6). According to him:

The Aborigine, who was a figure of envy and fear for Tucker, of trauma and affection for Mrs. Praed, of spite and sentimentality for Boldrewood, of nostalgia and mythological curiosity for McCrae, of burlesque and uncertainty for Kendall and Brunton Stephens, of compassion for Harpur, ended up, for these nineteenth-century writers, as a vehicle

for their difficulties of being in Australia, and for their fate as Australians. (110)

The push towards Australian Federation in 1901 suggested to the authors of the Nationalist school that themes about Aborigines could be re-deployed in support of Australian distinctiveness. Healy notes that the period 1905-1925 did not have access to the Aborigines and was not touched by memories of them. The breakthrough on this issue was made by Katherine Susannah Prichard's novel *Coonardoo* (1929). She liberated the Aborigine from preconception and stereotype and restituted them at the centre of fictional attention and moral controversy. In 1926 Prichard had spent a few months at Turlee Station in the far north of Western Australia. The Aboriginal women whom she observed and with whom she spoke, led to the creation of some of her most fascinating writing. *Brumby Innes* (1940) is a realistic expose of naked sexual appetite and white exploitation of black in the Outback, while the short stories "The Cooboo" (1932) and "Happiness" (1932) concentrated upon Aboriginal women as the central focus of the narrative -- "as individuals who act rather than nameless characters who are acted upon" (Shoemaker 1310). Frank acknowledgement of sexual relationship between white men and black women and that too motivated by love created a critical storm of protest when *Coonardoo* appeared as a serial in *Bulletin* so that the novel was not published in Australia until 1965. According to critic Drusilla

Modjeska, *Coonardoo* was "effectively the first Australian novel to take an Aboriginal woman as its acknowledged subject" (x).

Terry Goldie notes that with the recognition of "an Other [the Aborigine] as having greater roots in Australia," the white Australians became "the alien within". This gave rise to "the impossible necessity of becoming indigenous" (63) which Goldie terms "indigenization". The white culture could either "reject the indigene, by stating that the country really began with the arrival of the whites"; or "attempt to incorporate the Other" (Goldie 63).

In some cases like Henry Handel Richardson's nation-building trilogy *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* (1930), the Aborigines are not mentioned at all but Goldie states that "for many writers the only chance for indigenisation seemed to be through the humans who were truly indigenous, the Aborigines" (63) and that these efforts ranged from "pseudo Aboriginal names for aspects of white Australian culture to sensitive and sophisticated efforts such as the novels of Patrick White" (63).

The Jindyworobaks wanted to annex or join the culture of white Australians to the culture of the Aboriginal Dreaming. According to Rex Ingamells, the founder of the group "the Jindyworobaks [. . .] are those individuals who are endeavouring to free Australian art from whatever alien influences trammel it [. . .]" (222). One way of signaling their desire

to do this was by using words appropriated (sometimes misappropriated) from Aboriginal languages, mainly Aranda. "Moorawathimeering" (1935) by Rex Ingamells illustrates this:

Into moorawathimeering,
where atninga dare not tread,
leaving wurly for a wilban,
tallabilla, you have fled.

Wombalunga curses, waitjurk--

though we cannot break the ban,
and follow tchidna any further
after one-time karaman. (1-8)

Moorawathimeering is the Land of the Lost, a place of sanctuary for the outcasts; atninga is the name given to a so-called vengeance party, charged with the task of administering Aboriginal justice; a wurly is a bark or tree-bough shelter; a wilban a cave; tallabilla an outlaw; wombalunga is the verb, to carry; waitjurk is murderer; tchnidna footprint and karaman leader. As Lawrence Bourke points out, "the Jindyworobaks considered Aboriginal mythology as a product of the landscape rather than of a local group, stripping the mythology of metaphysics to recycle it as secular symbols" (735). Yet it remained an important influence for the study of Aboriginal culture.

The thematic use of the Aborigine expanded dramatically in the 1930s. Xavier Herbert's seminal novel, *Capricornia* (1938), examined the concept of Aboriginal culture as an alternative worldview. It portrays the destruction of the Larrapunta tribe by the European invasion, the ludicrous forms of behaviour which accompany the imposition of white civilization, the birth of Norman or Naw-nim, the half-caste, among the Aborigines, and his search for his identity:

Young Mark Anthony Shillingsworth, or, as the natives called him, Naw-nim, which was their way of saying No-name. . . . The name No-name was the one usually given by the natives to dogs for which they had no love but had not the heart to kill or lose. It was often given to half-castes as well. (qtd. in Healy 163)

Rejected by the white society, Norman is impelled towards the other alternative, which waits for the half-caste -- the world of the Aborigine.

The Moving Image (1946) by Judith Wright established the moral dimension of the Aboriginal theme by involving Aboriginal characters and situations in a symbolic interrogation of white violence and dispossession. The viciousness of first contact which had been a lodged irritant in the memories of the squatting class resurfaces in Judith Wright and makes her vulnerable to the silent wounds of history (Healy 183). In "Nigger's Leap" night, a symbol for old crimes seems to overrun Western society in Australia:

Here is the symbol, and the climbing dark
a time for synthesis. Night buoys no warning
over the rocks that wait our keels; no bells
sound for her mariners. Now must we measure
our days by nights, our tropics by their poles,
love by its end and all our speech by silence. (9-15)

Aboriginal place and people come together in her poetry and in the "Bora ring" she speaks of the hidden presence of a culture:

Only the grass stands up
to mark the dancing-ring: the apple-gums
posture and mime a past corroboree,
murmur a broken chant. (5-8) (Healy 185)

Even though "the hunter is gone" and "the nomad feet are still",

[. . .] the rider's heart
halts at a sightless shadow, an unsaid word
that fastens in the blood the ancient curse,
the fear as old as Cain. (13-16) (Healy 185)

The grass and the apple gum stand up for and as the painted bodies of the dancers, secreted, but not lost, in the earth, and the physical landscape becomes porous to the psychological fear of the invader.

Wright's metaphysical approach was later followed by Randolph Stow in *To The Islands* (1958) and by Patrick White in *Voss* (1957), *Riders in the Chariot* (1961), and *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976). Stow had gone to live

at the notorious Forrest River Mission in the Kimberleys before writing *To the Islands*, and in it he traces the life of a White mission boss Heriot. His act of hostility towards Rex, a young Aborigine forces him into flight in which he is guided by an Aboriginal companion, Justin through the Western desert towards the Islands of the dead. He is placed in a position of having to seek the forgiveness of the Aborigine and is redeemed from his past arrogance, which is that of the white race towards the Aborigines, when, displaced in the desert he enters into a sympathetic identification with the Aborigines. His repentance "is a transforming act of homage to a people and a culture he has maligned by his ignorance" (Healy 229). In *Voss*, based on the story of the German explorer Ludwig Leichhardt, the Aborigines are the chorus and the context. "As an organic society, indifferent to time, and accommodating, at the depth of their being, to the universe around them, they contrast favourably with the abstraction of Voss" (Healy 195). Throughout the book the pattern of meeting, and rejection by the indigenes characterise the moments of contact. Alf Dubbo, the Aboriginal painter, in *Riders in the Chariot*, is a displaced Aborigine in the mythical Sydney suburb, Sarsaparilla. He gives an Aboriginal view of the world and becomes "the vehicle for an integrated conception of man in Australia, embracing black and white, innocent and guilty, past and present" (Healy 204). *A Fringe of Leaves* is based on the story of Eliza Fraser, a white woman who was shipwrecked off the Queensland coast in the 1840s. It depicts the savagery White sees

under the surface of the civilized society and the sufferings of Aboriginal Australians. White gives a sensitive and penetrating revision of Aboriginal man in the figures of Jackie, Dugald, and Alf Dubbo, who are "touched into uncertainty and deprivation by contact with white civilization" (Healy 199). They provide "a removed but indigenous view of the society raised by Europeans in Australia over the bones and rights of the Aborigines" (Healy 203).

Thomas Keneally's *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (1961), Peter Mather's *Trap* (1966) and Nene Gare's *The Fringe Dwellers* (1961) show a sensitivity to Aboriginal concerns. In *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* the protagonist Jimmie is represented as being disenchanted with Aboriginal society as he knows it, aspiring to equality on white terms. Starting from the story of Jack Trap a part-Aboriginal, *Trap* moves into a history of black-white relations in Australia with all the savagery this involves.

Since 1970s it was the genres of poetry and drama that have emphasized the Aboriginal theme. Les Murray, who calls himself the last of the Jindyworobaks utilises the rhythms and tones of traditional Aboriginal song cycles in 'The Ballad of Jimmy Governor' (1972), 'The Buladelah-Taree Holiday Song Cycle' (1977), which is a rewriting of R.M.Berndt's translation of "The Wonguri-Mandjikai Song Cycle of the Moon bone" and in *The Boys who Stole the Funeral* (1980). In the latter he makes use of a heroic Aboriginal figure of pseudo-legend who by

addressing one of the boys in an imitation of an Aboriginal dream vision indigenises him. A sensitivity to collective Pintupi Orality can be seen in the poetry of Billy Marshall-Stoneking in *Singing the Snake* (1990).

On the stage, David Ireland's *Image in the Clay* (1964), Jill Shearer's *The Foreman* (1977) and Thomas Keneally's *Bullie's House* (1981) focus on issues of cultural clash, and considers the possibilities for racial accommodation. A majority Black cast in these plays provides a useful platform for indigenous actors, though the works themselves are not written by Aboriginal authors. Bob Maza was one of the Aboriginal actors in the original production of *Bullie's House*.

The Theatre had used either inflated diction or pidgin and exotic dress to present the stage indigene. Items of indigenous material culture were used for its symbolic power. Song and music and various non-vocal forms of indigenous sounds like that of rhythm sticks or sounds of the corroboree indicated indigenous presence. In most nineteenth and twentieth century plays the Aborigine is employed as comic relief -- as a figure of fun or the faithful servant clown -- with realism being the mode of the play (Goldie 170-190).

Terry Goldie identifies sex, violence, orality, mysticism and historicity as the "standard commodities" (Said 190) created by the semiotic field of the Aborigine in Australian Literature. According to him sex and violence "are poles of attraction and repulsion, temptation by the

dusky maiden and fear of the demonic violence of the fiendish warrior" (15). Picturing the indigene as land the male warrior is seen "as hostile wilderness, the new, threatening land", and the maiden as "restorative pastoral, the new available land" (Goldie 64). He illustrates how the female indigene as emanation of the land is a source of indigenisation, in various ways. In Eleanor Dark's *The Timeless Land* (1941) the "white blackfellow" Johnny, through his Aboriginal wife, "rediscovered the earth" (23). The title character in Prichard's *Coonardoo* provides a native counterpart to the male hero's white devotion to the land he owns.

She had loved Wytaliba and been bound up with the source of its life. Was she not the well in the shadows? Had she not some mysterious affinity with that ancestral female spirit which was responsible for fertility, generation, the growth of everything? (199-200).

Hugh sends her away which destroys himself, her and the land.

Coonardoo's spirit had withered and died when she went away from Wytaliba, was something of what Chitali said. And that withering and dying of Coonardoo's spirit had caused a blight on the place. (199)

Goldie wonders whether this semiotic field will ever allow the indigene to be anything other than the land, a suitable ground for the cultivation of indigenization (40).

The male Aborigine, Goldie notes is almost always represented as violence, with mixed race often intensifying the evil (Goldie 85-106). He points out that most nineteenth century texts give detailed portraits of indigenous violence and words like "devil", "fiend" or "demon" describe the indigene. In some, indigenous violence is shown as sacrifice, or as maintenance of defined indigenous values. While certain violent acts are presented as part of indigenous systems of law others demonstrate an absence of law or are shown as a superior form of government. Indigenous dance often signifies a frenzied prelude to violence and cannibalism forms a prime subject for black humour. Most literary images present violence as an essential characteristic of the indigene. Alcohol is often shown as a cause for sex and violence, which are presented as manifestations of the degraded Aborigine. None recognise violence as the direct and unavoidable product of imperial invasion or white society as essentially violent.

Orality is all the associations raised by the indigene's speaking, non-writing state (Goldie 107-126). In early works it was seen as a symptom of inferiority, a sign of demonic possession and are often characterised by the inflated diction of the orator or their silence. Throughout nineteenth century literature, the typical "translation" of indigene speech uses inverted syntax and various archaisms such as second person singular. Writers attempted to transform Aboriginal orality into Australian writing as a means for indigenization. The use of an

Aboriginal narrator, helped present the text as the product of an Aboriginal voice. Aboriginal speech, names and language were usually represented as appealing. Early texts used a few native words heavily glossed while contemporary ones used Aboriginal terms defined only by context.

Few texts from the early nineteenth century considered indigenous religious beliefs valid. They were shown to be inferior and absurd superstitions. But in many contemporary texts it is seen as a means of indigenisation. In *Poor Fellow My Country* the central white character Jeremy is visited by an Aboriginal spirit, which makes his Aboriginal friend assert: "Now you all-same blackfeller [. . .] belong country!" (qtd. in Goldie 136). Through the indigene the white character gains soul and the potential of becoming rooted in the land.

Historicity, the fifth commodity, shapes the indigene into a historical artifact, a remnant of a golden age, which seems to have little connection to contemporary life. The Other is not living Aborigines but memories of people long obliterated. Many novels, which deal with Australian history like Eleanor Dark's *The Timeless Land* trilogy show Aborigines only as a beginning of Australia. The heroic Aborigine of the Golden Age is depicted in Henry Kendall's "The Last of his Tribe", and the degraded Aborigine in the mock epic *The Raid of the Aborigines* (1875) by William Wilks. The prehistoric Aborigine is considered to be Aborigine,

the present Aborigine is not. The indigene of today continues to be a deviant, a drunk and a prostitute.

According to Goldie, "sensitivity has failed to erase the circumscriptions of the image of the indigene" (8). As Goodwin and Lawson illustrates the white interpretations of Aborigines, by even the most knowledgeable and sympathetic of white writers like Prichard and Herbert do not correspond with Aboriginal perceptions. They are framed by European literary experience. The account of Yagan in George Fletcher Moore's *Diary of Ten Years Eventful Life of an Early Settler in Western Australia* (1884) is very different from the presentation of Yagan in Jack Davis's play *Kullark* (1982). Mudrooroo's *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* (1983) and Robert Drewe's *The Savage Crows* (1976) both deal with the struggle of the Tasmanian Aborigines to resist genocide. The former written from the point of view of Wooreddy, the last Aboriginal male from the Bruny Island clan in the South east of Tasmania proves more convincing than Drewe's treatment of the character as a "living fossil". The Oombulgurri massacre treated by Jack Davis in *No Sugar* and Randolph Stow in *To the Islands* are very different.

Aboriginal Writing in English

Aboriginal writing in English is considered to be a relatively recent phenomenon in Australian Literature. It constitutes and represents the

cultural interaction between local literary traditions and those of the immigrant, English-speaking dominant language majority. It arises out of the irrepressible desire of the Aboriginal community to present its perspective, its side of the frontier. By appropriating the imperial language, its discursive forms and its modes of representation the Aboriginal community is able to intervene more readily in the dominant discourse, to interpolate their own cultural realities and to reach a wider audience of readers. Using the English language to bear the burden of the Aboriginal experience, they present a different mode of postcolonial resistance to cultural hegemony.

In the introduction to *Paperbark*, Davis, Muecke, Narogin, and Shoemaker sees Aboriginal Writing as "a *community gesture* towards freedom and survival, rather than the self expression of an individual author" (3). Broadly defining writing as "any sort of meaningful inscription" (3) in the case of Aboriginal Australia, they include sand paintings and drawings, body markings, paintings and engravings on bark or stone etc. It may be seen as "a form of pictorial writing which could be read off by someone with a knowledge of the symbol system" (Johnson, *Aboriginal Writing Today* 22). Roberta Sykes says: "When I see a bark painting, to me that's a story. I can read it. It's a series of symbols and other things that tell a story about the particular person's dreaming [. . .] we had a literature. It wasn't on pages like a book, it was on bark. But what's your paper made out of? (*Writers in Action* 39).

With literacy in English there came a change in traditional methods of literature. Penny Van Toorn points out that from as early as 1796 Aboriginal people have utilised a broad range of written and printed textual forms including letters, poems, essays, pamphlets, newsletters, newspaper articles, petitions, manifestoes, speeches, interviews, anecdotes and traditional stories. The letter dictated on 29 August 1796 by Bennelong to Lord Sydney's steward, whom he had met on his visit to England is one such example. In 1830 and 1831 on the Congregational mission at Lake Macquarie in New South Wales an Awabakal man named Biraban, who was fluent in both English and the Awabakal language, taught Awabakal to missionary Lancelot Threlkeld and assisted him in translating the Gospel of St Luke into Awabakal. But his name is not listed as the co-author of the translation. The Christian Aboriginal evangelist James Unaipon, had collaborated closely with the missionary George Taplin in the 1860s and 1870s in the recording of traditional Ngarrinyeri stories and customs. But the authorship is attributed to Taplin alone in bibliographical entries on this translation work. Numerous journals, memoirs and reports of missionaries, early settlers, government officials, ethnographers and others also contain transcriptions of diverse kinds of spoken Aboriginal English. This shows that long before Aboriginal alphabetic literacy Aboriginal people had collaborated in the production and reproduction of written texts (Toorn 754-760).

The first written expression in English of Indigenous people in Australia is considered to be *The Flinders Island Weekly Chronicle* a hand written journal produced by Tasmanian Indigenous men under the direction of the superintendent of their station G. A. Robinson. In 1837 it appeared every Saturday (Mudrooroo 34-35). It was the "expression of an Indigenous minority living on the fringes of the majority community" (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 33).

Bruce McGuinness has observed in *Aboriginal Writing Today* that a considerable amount of early writings by Aboriginal people were in the form of petitions and similar documents, with land rights often forming the ultimate aim and that most of them are hidden within the government archives and departmental files (46). According to him:

[. . .] there are Aboriginal people right throughout Australia who are not only adept in the field of writing, but are quite creative in the way in which they approach that task. Their writings are quite distinct and quite different from your ordinary run of the mill ways of writing that are acceptable to the publishing companies and [. . .] to the discipline of literature as we know it today (*Aboriginal Writing Today* 46)

The first account of Aboriginal Writing in this regard was the famous nine mile long bark petition produced by the Aboriginal people of the Coranderrk mission station in Victoria. In 1882, it was discovered

that it was indeed an Indigenous person, named Thomas Dunolly who had sent to the Aboriginal Protection Board and the Government, the letters and petitions expressing the genuine feelings of his people (Davis & Hodge 1985; Mudrooroo 1997). According to Penny Van Toorn, the proof of Aboriginal authorship was politically crucial to the fate of the Aboriginal community since it prevented the Victorian Board for the Protection of Aborigines (BPA) from closing the Coranderrk Aboriginal Settlement in the early 1880s (761). She also shows that, in 1963 attempts were made to discredit the Yirrkala people's Bark petition to the federal Government in Canberra, which questioned the decision of the Liberal Government to hand over a large portion of the Yirrkala Reserve to the Gove Bauxite (Mining) Corporation (760). Hence questions of authorship, attribution, editorial intervention and framing are, as Toorn observes, economically and politically crucial to Aboriginal people (760). While samples of traditional Aboriginal oral literature in translation gets included in anthologies of Australian literature, early Aboriginal texts written in English are left out (757).

The first Aboriginal "writer", in the European romantic sense of an individual expressing his/her own ideas, was David Unaipon, a Nunga from Point Mcleay in South Australia. His *Native Legends* (1929) was the first book published by an Aboriginal Australian. Educated by missionaries into Western genres and equally at home with Victorian theology and Black Australian Mythology, he recast Nunga legends in

Aboriginal spoken forms into Standard English written texts. His extensive manuscript and typescript entitled "Legendary Tales of Australian Aborigines" (1929) contains many "Christianised legends, religious fables and anthropological notes" (Shoemaker 44). Shoemaker and Davis describe them as "a fascinating synthesis of quasi-documentary traditional tribal material and Scripture, as well as symbolism more characteristic of fairy tales" (37). During the 1930s and 40s he had published several stories in mission magazines and had produced a brief autobiography in 1951 (Shoemaker & Davis 38). The anthropologist William Ramsay Smith's *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aborigines* (1930)[reprinted upto 1970], reproduced most of the stories contained in Unaipon's manuscript without any acknowledgement (Davis et al 4). This (mis)appropriation is an example of "white exploitation of black cultural material" (Watego, *Encyclopedia* 2).

Later when Aboriginal people moved away from reserves and missions to cities and to educational institutions, they started writing creatively about their Aboriginality in the style of white writers' accepted literature (Bruce McGuinness 46). Bruce McGuinness points out that, in order to exist in the cities, the indigenous people became:

"hunters and gatherers within the city, within the new urban life, and to be hunters and gatherers there they have to

change their weapons. The spear and the boomerang and the woomera are no longer acceptable weapons within the city area. They must change their mode of weaponry that they used to survive with.”

Though it doesn't change Aboriginal lifestyles to a great degree, in an urban situation they needed to become less visible in order to

“escape the stereotyping and stigmatising that goes on when Aboriginal people do things that other people do. Because of the colour of their skin, because of their need to portray an image, that is an image that is beneficial to them as a nation of people, then they need to use a diverse method to achieve this. They become actors in fact. They are able to act in numerous ways. They portray different images in different ways”. (*Aboriginal Writing Today* 47).

This is reflected in their various styles of writing too.

According to Jack Davis, in 1924, when the first work by an Aboriginal author was published “it was believed that we had the intelligence of children and we were members of a dying race”. (12), and as late as 1969 “there were some members of Australian society who believed we were incapable of writing for publication”. But the contemporary Aboriginal writer has the image of being “supremely flexible, the master of a multiplicity of styles and forms” (Davis&Hodge 2)

Impediments to Black Australians in having their work published lasted well into the 1960s; so did the unwillingness within the wider white community to accept the validity of the Aboriginal voice. Cliff Watego recounts how, when Kath Walker returned from Adelaide after presenting her poem "Aboriginal Charter of Rights", at the FCAATSI meeting in 1962, her residence had been broken into and all her clothes destroyed in an attempt to intimidate her. She says: "this was the first time they (the whites) realized I was really writing my own poetry. Up till then they were prepared to think that someone else was writing for me" (qtd. in *Connections* 18). Oodgeroo Noonuccal (formerly Kath Walker) published the first volume of verse of an Aboriginal writer *We Are Going* in 1964. Its record sales ranked her among the highest selling poets in Australian history. Since then Australian traditions have been transformed from oral to written forms more than ever before. Mudrooroo published the first Aboriginal Novel *Wild Cat Falling* in 1965. A small but steady flow of books followed in the years upto the publication of Kevin Gilbert's *Living Black* (1977), a landmark work. There has been an abundance of publications in the 1980s and beyond. The bicentennial events of 1988 focused more attention upon "First Australians", their grievances, their protests and their creative works than any year since the invasion. Aboriginal literature now includes poetry, fiction, drama, autobiography and biography, Aboriginal Myth and Legend, transcribed testimony material, life history and political, sociological and educational

writing. Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Kevin Gilbert, Jack Davis, Mudrooroo Narogin, Robert Merrit, Dick Roughsey, Bobby Sykes, Lionel Fogarty, Archie Weller, Faith Bandler, Elsie Roughsie, Bill Rosser, Ruby Langford, Ginibi, Daisy Utemorrah, Sally Morgan and Bill Neidjie are some of the significant Aboriginal Islander writers/speakers.

As Cliff Watego points out while Unaipon's protest is tentative, the revolt of Bostock and Gilbert is uncompromisingly aggressive and in recent Aboriginal writing there is a movement away from protest to towards sophisticated cultural self-criticism of the post-colonial condition (*Connections* 5).

Traditional Aboriginal poetry, which had always stressed continuity between past and present, was able to respond creatively to the impact of European settlement, and continue a narrative and song tradition of major world importance. Due to the enormous cultural differences between the races the settlers were unable to comprehend the ageless achievements of Aboriginal people. According to Mudrooroo, the first generation poets, Jack Davis, Kath Walker, Kevin Gilbert, and Colin Johnson "scarred by assimilation" (82) used the techniques and verse structures of white culture to convey their message. But the poetry of new generation poets like Lionel Fogarty "is layered and textured into shapes and meanings which are difficult for European readers to understand." (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 43) Using indigenous

English they give voice to the maban reality and speak of the ancestors who fought against the imposition of European models of thought and feeling (82). "Aboriginal poetry rattles, flings and bends the chains and rules of verse" but Gilbert points out in his anthology of Black Australian Poetry, *Inside Black Australia* that "within each bending one can see the cyclical incantation, the emotional mnemonics, the substance from which Aboriginal poetry is made" (xvi). To fully appreciate their import he says that "one needs to understand a little of the poet, the social and historical context from which is wrought the subjective crystallisation of the voice" (xix).

Fiction in Aboriginal Writing is based on the tradition of oral story telling and it continues in works like *Karobran* (1981), *The Day of the Dog* (1981), *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* (1983) and *The Kadaitcha Sung* (1990). This is the form which is mainly used to deconstruct and indigenise the invader history of Australia and the form through which post history is being conveyed. Traditional stories deal with the human place in the world, relations between the environment and the many possibilities in life, in human relations. Modern stories while addressing similar issues are also political in that they deal with the status and treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia, which has a high indigenous incarceration rate. Men's stories such as Charles Perkins's *A Bastard Like Me* (1975) and Archie Weller's *The Day of the Dog* while endorsing the powerful past of the Aboriginal way tell of

the destruction of the traditional male role and a search for a new one in the reality of modern Australia. Women's stories like Doris Pilkington's *Caprice -- A Stockman's Daughter* and Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987) are about solidarity and building esteem in the future generations.

There is a preponderance of biography or autobiography (life story) in Aboriginal written literature. According to Mudrooroo and the Berndts there was such a form in traditional oral literature -- detailing the adventures of a character. Some tell the story of hardships and work through to a transition of adaptation and survival. They provide an explanation for what it has been like for Aboriginal people to overcome enormous obstacles such as forced assimilation policies, separation from family and communities, unequal access to service etc. in a hostile environment. Others speak of what it is to be black in Australia then and today. Life stories have acted as agents of social change.

Other works such as Bill Neidjie's *Story About Feeling* and Paddy Roe's *Gularabulu* (1983) based on traditional Oral storytelling methods and meant to be read aloud call for new interpretative strategies. The knowledge that the sacredness of the land is fundamental to the Aboriginal worldview is an essential pre-requisite for understanding an Aboriginal Story. To isolate the story from its roots in the land is to destroy it.

WORKS CITED

- "Aboriginals.". *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Bourke, Lawrence. "Jindyworobak Movement." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W.Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Dampier, William. "from *A New Voyage Round the World: 1688.*" (1697). *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 303-305.
- Davis, Jack and Bob Hodge. Introduction. *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985. 1-6.
- Davis, Jack, Stephen Muecke, Mudrooroo Narogin and Adam Shoemaker. Eds *Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writings*. St.Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990.
- Davis, Jack. "Aboriginal Writing: a Personal View." *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985. 11-19.
- Djanggalawul Song Cycle*. Song 1. Trans. Ronald M. Berndt. *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 80.
- Edwards, Bill. "Living the Dreaming." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke,

- Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 65-84.
- Frost, Alan. "Exploration Literature (Australia)." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Goldie, Terry. *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Literatures*. Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989.
- . "Signifier Resignified: Aborigines in Australian Literature." *Aboriginal Culture Today*. Ed. Anna Rutherford. Sydney: Dangaroo Press-Kunapipi, 1988. 59-75.
- Goodwin, Ken. *A History of Australian Literature*. Hampshire: Macmillan, 1986.
- Goulburn Island Cycle*. Song 4. Trans. Ronald M. Berndt. *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 81-82.
- Harpur, Charles. "from *The Creek of the Four Graves*." 1845; revised 1867. *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 319-325.
- Healy, J.J. *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia*. 1978. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989.

- Ingamells, Rex. "The Word Jindyworobak." *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 222.
- Ingamells. "Moorawathimeering." *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 223.
- Isaacs, Jennifer. Comp. and ed. *Australian Dreaming: 40,000 Years of Aboriginal History*. 1980. Sydney: Lansdowne, 1996.
- Johnson, Colin. "White Forms, Aboriginal Content." *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985. 21-33.
- Kendall, Henry. "The Last of His Tribe." 1863. *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 90.
- Lawson, Henry. "The Old Bark School." *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 259-260.
- Marika, Wandjuk. Foreword. *Australian Dreaming: 40,000 Years of Aboriginal History*. comp. and ed. Jennifer Isaacs. 1980. Sydney: Lansdowne, 1996.
- McGuinness, Bruce and Denis Walker. "The Politics of Aboriginal Literature." *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob

- Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985.
43-54.
- McLeod, A.L. "Representation of the Aborigines in Australian Children's Literature." *Literary Half-Yearly*. 37.2 (1996): 103-118.
- Modjeska, Drusilla. Introduction. *Coonardoo*. 1929. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1990.
- Mudrooroo. *Indigenous Literature of Australia: Milli Milli Wangka*. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1997.
- Muecke, Stephen, Jack Davis, and Adam Shoemaker. "Aboriginal Literature." *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*. Ed. Laurie Hergenham, Melbourne: Penguin, 1988. 27-46.
- Nelson, Emmanuel S. Introduction. ed. *Connections: Essays on Black Literatures*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988. 1-9.
- Prichard, Katherine Susannah. *Coonardoo*. 1929. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1990.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. 1978. London: Penguin, 1995.
- Shoemaker, Adam. "Aborigines in Literature (Australia)." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W.Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994. 10-11.
- Shoemaker. "Prichard, Katherine Susannah." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W.Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994. 1309-1310.

- Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*. Ed. John F. Ross. New York: Holt, 1967.
- Sykes, Roberta. "Love Poems and Other Revolutionary Actions." *Writers in Action: The Writer's Choice Evenings*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Currency Press, 1990. 27-41.
- Tench Watkin. "from *A Complete Account of the Settlement of Port Jackson*." 1793. *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 86-89.
- Tiffin, Helen. "Kendall, Henry." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Tiffin. "Praed, Rosa Caroline." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Toorn, Penny Van. "Early Aboriginal Writing: and the Discipline of Literary Studies." *Meanjin*. 55.4 (1996): 754-765.
- Unaipon, David. "Wondangar, Goon na Ghun (Whale and Star Fish)." *Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writings*. Eds. Jack Davis, Stephen Muecke, Mudrooroo Narogin and Adam Shoemaker. 1990. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996. 33-52.

Watego, Cliff. "Aboriginal Literature." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994.

Watego, Cliff. "Backgrounds to Aboriginal Literature." *Connections: Essays on Black Literatures*. Ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988. 11-23.

Wolf, Eric. *Europe and the People Without History*. 1982.

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

Chapter II

Aboriginal Drama: From Ritual to Theatre

You see, we've always been acting. Aboriginal people are the greatest actors in the world . . . We've acted up before magistrates, we've acted up before the police, we've acted up before social workers; we've always done our own mime.

(Shoemaker, *Black Words* 235)

Ritual and aesthetic expression in Aboriginal Australia

According to the Berndts, in most Australian Aboriginal groups there existed actions which represented "relatively well co-ordinated and defined sequences, of a repetitive kind, directed towards goals which [were] at least partly explicit" (228), as part of rituals and were considered to be extremely important.

It was believed that "by acting in certain prescribed ways, in accordance with the rules laid down by mythical characters of various kinds who dominated [[. . .]the creative] period, human beings can keep in touch with them or with the power which they continue to exercise" (Berndt 229). Hence rituals acted out events (the wanderings and activities of various beings) or instructions incorporated in myths and were concerned with issues of life and death, fertility and the relations between man and other aspects of nature. The correct narration of the

stories, painting of the symbols, singing of the songs and performance of the rituals, left as legacies by the Ancestral Spirit beings, are designed to ensure the maintenance of the cosmos and society. Berndt describes rituals in which the increase of a particular species may be brought about by calling the appropriate names, or by touching up the cave paintings relating to it or by imitating the behaviour of the species (*First Australians* 271). In ritual dancing, an actor performing the actions relevant to his totem not only lives the part but actually becomes that totem (Berndt 239).

There is a close association between myth and ritual in Aboriginal Australia. According to the Berndts, all ritual action and most of the symbolism are based on myths and even an ordinary ceremony providing entertainment to the camp may draw on themes and characters from the major myths (261). Myths are seen as a means of giving life to individuals and to the groups by connecting them with the Dreamtime and rituals are myths in action. They establish a connection between past and present, between the supernatural and the earthly and between people and the land. Myth and ritual provided the members of an aboriginal community, a framework through which to perceive the world. It enabled them to see that they belonged within a scheme, which has continuity as well as comprehensiveness. Myth as spoken or sung ritual described and explained what people needed to know about this scheme, while acted out ritual expressed the same content in a different dimension (Berndt 287-88).

Ritual, which is episodic, is substantiated through spoken statements as well as through material symbolic representations. The Berndts describe Aboriginal ritual as "stylised and symbolic action carried out with specific ends in view, and having additional meanings and implications for social living [. . .]." (Berndt 259). According to them many of the rituals are designed directly or indirectly to safeguard or promote the welfare of the community in general (Berndt 263). All aboriginal religious ritual focussed on life and was oriented around survival -- physical and spiritual. It gave reassurance from the past, hope for the future, an affirmation that man is not entirely helpless, whatever hardships he may suffer, the conviction that he can intervene to some degree, do something to influence the forces which impinge on him (Berndt 288).

Dramatic performances

The theatre has always been a part of Aboriginal heritage. Nevertheless it has gone unrecognized by the public in general, since it did not conform to the accepted Western notion of "theatre". The very idea of a theatre building, a solid construction with a managed environment of lighting and heating in which a privileged fraction of a population is segregated or quarantined from the rest of the society, derives from northern Europe and is diametrically opposed to the performance practices of Aborigines. In religious ritual, the re-

enactment of myths or sections of myths is a dramatic performance in itself. There are differences in sacred and non-sacred performances, in the significance and symbolic meaning of the dancing and posturing and in the matter of participation (Berndt 382). "Corroboree" is the word generally used in English for all Aboriginal ceremonies, rituals and entertainment involving singing and dancing, disregarding great differences between sacred and non-sacred dancing and dramatic performances. According to the Berndts, though a great deal has been written about the dance and corroboree in Aboriginal Australia, few anthropologists have been able to record the complicated and varied dance steps and hand movements. Berndt gives examples of non-sacred ceremonies documented by Basedow. It includes a crocodile ceremony of the Cambridge Gulf people, in which

a row of men stand with legs apart, while a 'crocodile' actor wriggles between them. Reaching the first man he lies flat, legs close together like a tail, arms bent with palms flat on the ground, then raises the front of his body, booming harshly to imitate the cry of a crocodile. (Berndt 382).

A dance at Forrest River in which crow actors hop around an old man representing a carcass; and a popular Fowler's Bay scene in which a man imitates a woman collecting food are also described. It was noted that the lively Melville Island dancing included the buffalo dances with their

vigorous stamping and leaping while the Wogaidj camp dancing, was outstanding for the elegant and graceful hand movements of the women.

The Berndts have also observed that in Aboriginal communities the evenings are nearly always occupied with singing and dancing each song having its appropriate actions. He gives examples of the sandfly sequence in which as the songman claps his sticks and sings and the didjeridu is blown, women stand swaying slightly to the music, making stylised gestures of scratching; the wasp sequence in which they grasp each ear, nodding their heads sideways, as the song tells how the buzzing of the wasp irritates people trying to rest in the midday heat and of one of the Wudal songs in which they imitate a person putting wild honey into a long basket (383).

The dancing may be open or closed to audience participation. Some of the sacred ritual and ceremony was noted to be performed in the main camp, with group participation. In one of the camp ceremonies, which turned out to be a preliminary part of initiation, they observed that "the dancers wear conically-shaped headdresses superimposed with blood and feather down on a basis of brush and human-hair twine, and wear or carry a *wanigi* object" (Berndt 383). They prepared themselves behind a screen of bushes, and as they danced huge heaps of dry grass were set ablaze, flaming up so that the singing-audience can see the decorations quite clearly.

The basis of many ceremonies, according to them, is a dream; a man, occasionally a woman, claiming to have had a set of songs and dance-steps shown to him in a dream (Berndt 384). It is in the ordinary camp ceremonies that the Berndts have noticed that, "the attitudes of the dancers perhaps come closest to what we (as western Europeans) are used to" (386). The ceremonies included statements about how other people lived, or what people did in other places, as well as about local happenings: the "Afghan" and camel sequences, songs about boats seen at Wyndham, "Chinamen" living there, a fisherman trying to sell his catch (fish made of bark, dangling from each side of a pole carried on a man's shoulders) etc are examples (385). In one ceremony they noticed that wool bound in a conventional diamond shape was passed from hand to hand among a circle of men reclining around a fire, each in turn peering at it, moving it rhythmically from side to side. It stood for a "paper" read by the manager of one of the East Kimberley cattle stations (Berndt 385). Such dramatic scenes depicting and interpreting the changed circumstances, in which the Aborigines found themselves, have been reported from places all over the Continent. In situations of stress, ceremonies provided an outlet in which the Aborigines tried to look on the humorous side, mimicking the oppressor and proving that they were essentially, undefeated in spirit. Berndt describes one ceremony from Wave hill:

In one scene a policeman, a 'man with chains', was shown

trying to bring in 'witnesses' for a court case. The actors here were men, representing attractive young women all roped ('chained') together by the neck in a long line. The policeman led the way, dancing slowly around the clearing; but every now and then when he was looking the other way a small raggedy actor, a 'bagman' or 'swaggie', would come sneaking up from behind and try to take away one of the girls. The policeman, turning and seeing him, would drive him away, kicking at him and lashing out with a stick, with a great deal of noise and commotion: he wanted the girls for himself. The side play gestures and impromptu remarks of the actors, punctuating the singing, kept the audience in a state of hilarious laughter for over an hour. (Berndt 385)

They also point out that in all these performances there is no organised training involved and that the dance steps and movements, songs and organisation of acts are all learnt through observation and practice during the ceremonies themselves (Berndt 386). Based on the content of the ceremonies the Berndts divide them into three major groups:

1. Ceremonies which involve the re-enactment of myths or stories: these are presented in a stylized form and all actions are symbolically significant. The dance, the song and the ceremony as a whole are interdependent.

2. Dance movements, individually or collectively performed, in relation to specific songs, but not having mythical substantiation. These may be regarded as traditional, but as having no specific meaning other than that; it is the dance and the rhythm which count and not the explanation of it.

3. Imaginative and inventive dancing and songs composed to translate for public enjoyment, if not information, contemporary events of everyday living. Many of the dramatic performances with songs and musical accompaniment are of this sort, and they are not necessarily a result of alien impact. Only a small percentage concerns themselves with contact situations; the majority relate directly to the ongoing life of the camp. (386-87)

Aboriginal myths have "outside" and "inside" versions and even children's version. According to the Berndts, this practise of having different degrees of exclusiveness in myth content is quite common in Aboriginal Australia (388). They go on to say that wherever there is a tradition of oral story telling, we can legitimately speak of it as a dramatic art. It is a live, flesh and blood situation in which there is no impersonal barrier between the storyteller and his listeners. In communicating with them directly and personally, he draws on visual effects as a supplement to his spoken words and has at his command all

the local repertoire of gestures, hand and body movements, facial expressions, changes in tone, supplemented perhaps by embellishments of his own (390). As Berndt describes:

He may jump to his feet at a moment of excitement, subside to the ground again, pause, suddenly raise his voice or lower it to a whisper: and he may not object to questions which give him an opportunity to expand or elaborate some particularly interesting theme. But in any case the actual words he uses are only a skeleton, a framework upon which the narrative itself is built up and comes to life. (390)

In considering Aboriginal oral literature, the Berndts suggest that three main aspects be taken into account namely, its form or structure including the sequence of events and incidents and the language in which these are framed; the content or subject matter and the link between a myth or story and its social context. This is applicable in the analysis of contemporary Aboriginal plays too.

Apart from songs and poetic expression, dancing and dramatic performances, and other oral literature they have visual art which includes cave and rock paintings, rock engravings and petroglyphs, paintings on bark and crayon, body painting, sacred objects and emblems, carved human figures in wood, wax and clay figures, pole structures etc. Body painting is an important aspect of rituals. Almost

every part of the body is used for this purpose. Most commonly the face, chest and thighs are decorated with designs spreading across and over the shoulders to the back leaving the neck bare. According to Schechner, each detail of the pattern is linked to ancestral beings, sexual magic or recent events and hence Aborigine body painting is map-making and myth-telling (131). While decorating themselves they sing the relevant songs and retell the myth, and finally comes the ritual (426).

According to the Berndts, the songs and visual art produced cannot be understood by just hearing the literal meanings of words or by just looking at them. "It is the hidden or symbolic meaning, not the surface meaning, if any, which is the important thing" (412). Aboriginal art was a medium through which messages and ideas were communicated but the way in which it is done and the form it took depended upon the intended audience.

[. . .] attempts are made to say something to certain people --
- to women and to children, to all those of a specific social unit, to initiated persons only, to those of a particular age and status, and so on. It may be designed for one or more of these categories, although it may be understood by others within limited degrees. (Berndts, *The First Australians* 444).

Realistic and naturalistic expressions existed alongside conventionalised or stylised ones, though the Berndts consider the latter as more general.

They insist that there is no such thing as universal symbolism in Aboriginal Australia but that the rule is local identification (445).

According to the Berndts, in Aboriginal Australia, art is inseparable from its cultural and social setting. An artist's production is not just an individual response to an aesthetic urge but must have social significance and use (412). They reiterate the fact that all Aboriginal art was "living art" with specific functions in Aboriginal society that all of them had some kind of mythic association and that one art form was not necessarily produced in isolation but was associated with others (451).

While ritual emphasizes efficacy, theatre emphasizes entertainment. According to Schechner, efficacy and entertainment are opposed to each other, but form a binary system, a continuum.

Table 1

Efficacy - Entertainment Dyad (137-38)

EFFICACY	ENTERTAINMENT
(Ritual)	(Theatre)
results	Fun
link to an absent Other	only for those here
abolishes time, symbolic time	emphasizes now
brings Other here	audience is the Other

performer possessed, in trance	performer knows what he's doing
audience participates	audience watches
audience believes	audience appreciates
criticism is forbidden	criticism is encouraged
collective creativity	individual creativity

Source: Schechner, Richard. "From Ritual to Theatre and Back: The Structure/Process of the Efficacy-Entertainment Dyad". *Performative Circumstances from the Avant Garde to Ramlila*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1983. 124-163

He goes on to point out that whether one calls a specific performance ritual or performance depends on the degree to which the performance tends towards efficacy or entertainment. Moreover changing perspective changes classification (138). Theatre comes into existence when a separation occurs between audience and performers (142).

Philip Parsons in *Concise Companion to Theatre in Australia* has mentioned early performances by Aborigines in theatre after colonization. In 1852 the Malcom's Royal Australian Circus in Sydney had advertised that John Jones's troupe included "his two Aboriginal boys". In the 1870's Aborigines had been appearing under pseudonyms. The Sullivans, of Aboriginal and West Indian descent had been well known as the Colleano's and Con Colleano (1899-1973) as "Zeneto, Prince of

Wirewalkers" (9). According to Parsons, the Aborigines probably first appeared on the stage in *The Australian Bunyips* (1857). When actor and manager George Rignold (1834-1912) produced *It's Never Too Late to Mend* from Charles Reade's novel, in 1893, forty Queensland Aborigines appeared in "primitive wild Australian" scenes (9). Rignold's famous technique was to pose crowds on the stage so as to blend with hundreds more figures painted in perspective on the backcloth (245).

Gerry Bostock recounts how under threat of losing their rations Aborigines from the Reserve of Menindee in New South Wales were brought down to Sydney at the re-enactment of the arrival of Governor Philip. This, according to him, is Black Theatre performance "[. . .] directed by whites, directed by the Bicentenary Committee for 1938"; with the Aborigines "[. . .] playing the ancestors of the Koories in Sydney" (*Aboriginal Writing Today* 68).

Black and white performers collaborated for the first time in 1946, in *White Justice* a dance drama based on a strike by Aboriginal workers in northwest Australia. Actors from the Aborigines' League and New Theatre, Melbourne, appeared in it. In 1970, Dot Thompson, director of New Theatre Melbourne, directed the Aboriginal actor Jack Charles in Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot* and Aborigines first played non-Aboriginal roles, in Rodney Milgate's *A Refined Look at Existence*, when Jack Charles and Zac Martin acted. In 1972, Charles created Jack in John

Romeril's *Bastardy*, a play about fringe-dwellers, for the Australian Performing Group. In 1974, Charles and Martin and David Gupilil played leading parts in the Old Tote Theatre Company's production of *The Cradle of Hercules*, a play by Michael Boddy about early Sydney (Parsons 9).

Aboriginal drama

As Mudrooroo explains in *Aboriginal Writing Today*, "drama" did not exist prior to the arrival of the whites in Australia. The oral tradition that provides the basis of Aboriginal histories has, however, always consisted of song, music, dance and story telling, elements which inevitably become central to the Aboriginal practice and experience of drama. The development of Western drama from the Greek Dithyramb also points to a similar origin.

Mcnaughton in "Drama (overview)" observes that, hybridity as the bedrock of post-colonial theatre was first theorized by the South African H.I.E. Dhlomo in 1936, that he acknowledged the impossibility of a recapitulationist retrieval of precolonial cultural "purity" and argued that the past can only exist inasmuch as it is "grafted" on to the [westernised] present (*Encyclopedia of Post colonial Literatures in English* 369). Schechner has opined against the cultural zoo approach, which clamoured to preserve the original versions of age-old rituals that, even traditional performances varied greatly from generation to generation

since the oral tradition, being flexible had absorbed many personal variations within set parameters (146). Jack Davis by combining aspects of Aboriginal oral culture with the conventions of Western theatre redefines concepts of drama and establishes Aboriginal Drama as the most ancient of art forms.

Gilbert and Tompkins, in *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* have observed that in post-colonial societies, traditional enactments often function as key sites of resistance to imposed values and practices, as mnemonic devices that assist in the preservation of history, and as effective strategies for maintaining cultural difference through specific systems of communication -- aural, visual, and kinetic -- and through specific values related to local (often pre-contact) customs (54). They continue:

When traditional performance elements are incorporated into a contemporary play, they affect the play's content, structure, and style, and consequently, its overall meaning/effect. This process, which usually involves a departure from the techniques and assumptions of realism, stretches colonial definitions of theatre to assert the validity (and the vitality) of other modes of representation. As a way of appropriating received forms of drama and adapting them to fit the local experience, the meshing of performance

conventions is one form of what Sylvia Wynter has called folklore's 'cultural guerilla resistance against the Market economy'. (54)

Robert J Merrit in his preface to the second edition of his play *The Cake Man* says: "Theatre for us, [. . .] dates back to our rightful place in time [. . .] It was part of the natural way [. . .] It moulded our identity and carried our culture from generation to generation" (vii). According to Gerry Bostock, Black theatre is similar to Greek theatre and Shakespearean theatre in that it is political. He cites the example of Euripides' play *Trojan Women* in which, the lament of Hecuba, the Queen of Troy, on being taken away from her land, to Greece, a place she had no affinity with is very much like the feeling of Aborigines taken away from their reserves to an area out of their tribal existence and that this is political theatre. Using the analogy of Hamlet whose uncle the king had usurped and killed his father and married his mother, he describes the condition of the Aborigine. Surrounded by overwhelming outside forces Hamlet creates an image of himself as a mad man who wouldn't be a threat to taking over the crown, or the reins of government. Sometimes he has to convince himself of his sanity. Quoting from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, he illustrates that the feeling of political theatre during the time of Shakespeare relates closely to that of Black theatre.

To be or not to be that is the question
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The stings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. (3.1.59)

Gerry Bostock says:

Black theatre is political [. . .] It's the experience of living as a black person in today's society [. . .] in the general Australian society, wearing two faces [. . .] present[ing] one face to European society and one face to their black brothers and sisters. If this is not done one could easily lose one's identity and sanity" (64).

So in Bostock's opinion when theatre groups were formed it was to pass on to the younger generation, the knowledge of Aboriginal history, of stories and legends of Aboriginal heroes handed down by ancestors, of the happenings in the reserves etc (Davis and Hodge 67).

Before 1971 there were no Aboriginal plays -- performed, published or unpublished. Kevin Gilbert (1933-1992) became the first black Australian dramatist with his work, *The Cherry Pickers* (1971). According to Jack Davis, Gilbert's first dramatic venture was *The Gods Look Down and Other Sketches* (*Aboriginal Writing Today* 13). Gilbert discovered his

artistic talents while in goal serving a term for the manslaughter of his wife. This play, written behind bars, and smuggled out on toilet paper, focused on "a few important days in the lives of a group of cherry pickers who come together at the same orchard every year to work, celebrate, make love, sing, laugh and reminisce" (*Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia* 191). Gilbert who himself had been an itinerant seasonal worker before he was imprisoned, depicted the Aboriginal experience of life of the 1960s in their own personal point of view. As Bostock puts it in Davis and Hodge, "what's important to us isn't important in our terms to the rest of society" (68). Katherine Brisbane vividly recalls the opening sequence of the play and its effect on her:

Centrestage was a large, jolly black woman sitting on an upturned tub. As she chatted, the tub gave sporadic jumps and exuded muffled thumps and whines. In due course a child was released from the tub. She had been punished for some misdemeanor. The dialogue was good-hearted and good-humoured and the subject matter small community affairs. I was suddenly overawed with at being allowed into the domestic life of a people whose privacy had, for so long and for such good reason, been guarded from white eyes. (3)

Written in 1968, it was first presented in draft form at the Mews theatre in Sydney in 1971. Gilbert was given parole in 1971 after spending

fourteen years in goal. An activist for proper recognition of Aboriginal entitlement to justice, human rights and land rights, Gilbert played a leading role in the establishment of the Tent Embassy. In 1972 the Nindethana Theatre presented *The Cherry Pickers* in Fitzroy, Victoria, with an all-Aboriginal cast. The play has not been performed since.

Burrabingga Books later published a revised edition of the play, in 1988. Its prologue, workshopped at the first National Black playwright's conference in Canberra in January 1987, contains an introductory poem in mock-heroic form, a stylised history of the invasion of Australia by the Europeans, and a final cameo on the land rights campaign.

Nindethana Theatre which "arose out of the streets of Melbourne" (Bostock, *Aboriginal Writing Today* 67) is the first to talk about contemporary blacks. In Victorian Aboriginal language the name means 'a place for corroboree' (67). Bostock considers this theatre, which talks about people in Aboriginal communities, about Aboriginal heroes and about the experience of living as a black in contemporary society, "the hallmark of black achievement in theatre" (66).

Bob Maza and Jack Charles were involved in community theatre and wrote several revues. In 1972 they appeared in a series of sketches performed at the Melbourne New Theatre entitled *Jack Charles Is Up and Fighting*.

In 1971, two drama students Paul Coe of the Aboriginal Legal service and Jenny sheehan from the Independent theatre in Sydney applied to the Australian Council for the arts for a grant to conduct workshops. Their request was rejected for want of “an actor who [. . .] [had] some professional experience” (Bostock 69). So Bob Maza from Melbourne who was involved in the Nindethana Theatre was persuaded to come and establish Black Theatre in Sydney in 1972, then called the National Black Theatre. Gerald Bostock, who had been researching Aboriginal History in Sydney on leaving the army in 1970 after nine years’ service, was one of the founding members. People involved in the Black Theatre were also involved in community activities like medical service, legal service, housing projects etc. The Black Theatre began by doing reviews and sketches expressing Aboriginal feelings and thoughts about contemporary society, the Government and the environment, and was performing on the streets, in hotels and even in the lounges of pubs, with the aim of promoting Aboriginal political views through drama.

In response to a High Court ruling against a traditional claim to land ownership, Nimrod Street Theatre presented *Basically Black* in 1972 featuring artists like Bob Maza, Gary Foley and Zac Martin. It incorporated some of the sketches from the *Jack Charles* show. The participants were also involved in the setting up of the Tent Embassy on the lawns of the Parliament House.

When the Aboriginal Embassy happened on the lawns of the Parliament House protesting against the land rights statement made by the then Prime Minister Billy McMahon, -- namely, "Aborigines have the right to lease their tribal land" (qtd. in Davis and Hodge 70) — Black Theatre was there acting out in the general public the conditions of Aborigines in contemporary society. They performed as street groups, in the marches and in all the political demonstrations. At this time the Black American Movement also influenced them.

Carol Johnson, a former member of the internationally reputed New York Ensemble, visited Australia in 1972 and worked with the National Black Theatre in Sydney. Bryon Syron, the Aboriginal actor, producer, director and performer, studied in New York city with Leslie Uggams (black American actress and activist) and worked with Lloyd Richards (the highly acclaimed black American director of the play *A Raisin in the sun*). Syron believed that the Aboriginal theatre should develop in the way the black theatre has evolved in America in order to become the "soul of the country" (Nelson, *Westerly* 46). Jack Davis argued that, Aborigines should emulate the black American example of achievement and "set up their own presses, their own television media, their own radio stations" (qtd. in Nelson *Westerly* 49). According to one of the characters in his play *The Dreamers* :

There should be more smashin' and burnin' of these cars!
We'll make wadjellas [whites] sit up . . . They can't treat us
Blackfellahs like that. We'll be like them fellas in America:
we'll really get into these bastards. (Nelson, *Westerly* 49)

However, this piece was deleted from the final version of the play.

Though aware of the essential differences in black white relations in America and Australia (Chesson 148-49), the black movement in the United States became something of a model, and later Fiji and Nigeria did too (Chesson 134). Furthermore, Davis felt that it was time an Australian history from the Aboriginal point of view was produced. The present is rooted in the past, and the wellbeing of Aborigines depends upon a correct and balanced understanding of their own history (Chesson 150).

His trip to Nigeria to participate in the World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, held in Nigeria in 1977, modified his feelings, and made his later poems less bitter. According to him it showed him that blacks can exploit blacks just as readily as can any other race, that there is much room for greater tolerance and understanding at all levels of human interaction the world over (Chesson 189). This change of attitude is also reflected in the plays he wrote later.

Federal funding in 1973-74 enabled the Black Theatre group to obtain a factory building on lease, which was then converted into a theatre in the round with seating for hundred. The first production was

the revue *Basically Black* by Bob Maza. The first play staged there was Robert Merritt's *The Cake Man* in 1975. Bostock notes of its performances there:

The audience who'd never been to black theatre and had never been to the ghetto, had to go through the ghetto to get to the theatre, and that in itself was a great psychological advantage to the play, because people were coming there for the first time. . . . in that environment, in Redfern, you were confronting people not only with what was in the play, but what was in the street outside, so that had a dynamic sort of effect on all the audience. (*Aboriginal Writing Today* 72).

Written in 1973-74 while serving a prison sentence in Bathurst goal Robert Merritt's *The Cake Man* is based partly on his own experiences of growing up at the Erambie Mission. Described by Katherine Brisbane as the "first speaking portrait of life in an Aboriginal reservation" (3), the play deals with themes like injustice and poor living conditions, loss of esteem and dignity among the men on the reserves and the countervailing warmth and mutual support of Aboriginal family relationships. The main character "Ruby, tells her son [Pumpkinhead] tales of a mythical half-blind man who hands out cakes and other goodies to white boys. One day, she promises, he might see clearly enough to give them to black boys too". (*Encyclopedia of Aboriginal*

Australia 176). First staged by Bob Maza and Brian Syron at the Black Theatre, Redfern in 1975, it became the first Aboriginal play to enter the repertoire of the white theatre. In 1977 funded by the Aboriginal Arts Board of Australia Council and directed by George Ogilvie it had a successful six weeks season at Bondi Pavillion Theatre, Sydney. While at Redfern, “[. . .] audiences, both black and white, found their way into the black domain” at Bondi, “Audiences, both black and white, came from all over the country into the white domain” (Merritt, *The Cake Man* viii). According to Katherine Brisbane, the play’s success owed much to pioneering actors Justine Saunders and Brian Syron. Moreover the cast’s immediate identification with the characters gave the performed work a compelling emotional drive (3). It was adapted for television by ABC in 1977 and was published by Currency press in 1978 thus becoming the first published Aboriginal play. *The Cake Man* went on an American-Canadian tour in 1982 and represented Australia at the World Theatre Festival in Denver, Colorado. It attracted capacity crowds in its forty-one performances. It may be noted that the first Aboriginal plays were written in prison and theatre was used as a forum for protest.

The only other play produced at the Black Theatre before it ceased functioning in 1976 was Gerald Bostock’s *Here Comes the Nigger*. The first Aboriginal play with an urban setting it focused on the threats to the black Australian identity and dealt with the racism of the police, publicans and the populace, and the dangers which even well meaning

whites can pose. The emergence of a sense of black nationhood is shown to be a direct result of having to combat oppression in order to exist. It questions the principles by which white society continues its suppression of the Aboriginal populace and points out that though racism is attributed to social causes, it is used by the ruling sector to maintain economic and cultural dominance in society, and hence is political. (Watego, *Connections* 21). Never published in its entirety, two of its scenes had appeared in the journal *Meanjin* 36.4 (1977).

Though initially centred around Sydney, Western Australia has been the centre of dramatic activity since 1979. Jack Davis' first play *The Dreamers* was staged during the Bunbury Arts Festival in 1972 and *Kullark* in 1979 during the West Australian sesquicentenary celebrations.

Cliff Watego observes in "Aboriginal Literature" that, the first five Aboriginal plays performed, evoke the institutionalised stereotyping of blacks and provide an overview of the various forms of dependency upon white institutions that inhibited black advancement (*Encyclopedia of Post Colonial Literatures in English* 3). He goes on to show that in Kevin Gilbert's *The Cherry Pickers* the community of black itinerant fruit pickers are totally dependent upon the white orchard owner for their livelihood, that the blind black poet in Bostock's *Here Comes the Nigger* must rely upon a white female tutor to help him qualify for his Higher School Certificate, that the Aboriginal household in Robert Merrit's *The*

Cake Man is rescued from collapse only by the benevolence of a white civilian; that despite the continual efforts of the Nyoongahs in all phases of Jack Davis's *Kullark* to meet white society on its own patronising terms, white justice operates to reaffirm their inferiority, and that in *The Dreamers*, social inertia fixes the Wallitch family in a cycle of dependency on alcohol and welfare benefits that serves to conceal their spiritual association with their Dreaming (4).

In the late 1980s new playwright's entered the field of Black Australian Drama. Jack Davis' *No Sugar* premiered at the Festival of Perth in February, 1985 under the direction of Andrew Ross and his *Honeyspot* written to celebrate international Youth Year was premiered at the Come Out Festival in Adelaide in March the same year. Davis won the Australian Writers' Guild Awgie Award for best stage play for *No Sugar*. This play toured to the World Theatre Festival at Expo 1986 in Vancouver, Canada and was performed at Ottawa, Melbourne and London. In 1987, *The Dreamers* was revived and provided a counterpoint for the re-enactment of the launching of the first Fleet at Portsmouth during its four-week tour there. In 1987 Bryan Syron founded the National Black Playwrights' Conference and workshop. Out of it developed the Aboriginal National Theatre Trust (ANTT)

as a means of protecting the Aboriginal heritage in the performing arts, promoting Aboriginal theatre, producing

works by Aboriginal authors, providing a venue for Aboriginal performing artists and making available a permanent platform for political protest and social comment through drama. (*Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia* 21).

It organised a series of productions, which included two concerts, *Survival '88*, and *Not the 1988 Patry*; two plays, Bob Maza's *The Keepers* and Richard Walley's *Munjong*; and a television documentary *Black on Black*. The Australian Bicentennial of 1988 saw a wave of Black oppositional writing, including an assertion of the suppressed histories of Australia, especially by Jack Davis. His *Barungin* had its world premiere at the 1988 Festival of Perth. Richard Walley (*Coordah*), Bob Maza (*The Keepers*), Eva Johnson (*Tjinderella*) all had plays performed between 1984-89. The 1990s had seen new works by Davis, (*In Our Town*) Walley (*Munjong*) and Essie Bennell (*The Silent Years*). Most of these works were written in Western Australia and had the Festival of Perth as its launching pad. Jack Davis and his Swan River (later, Black Swan) Theatre Company have been involved with so many of them.

According to Berwyn Lewis, Davis was attracted to writing plays after he read the works of Chekov and became interested in "telling our simple stories in a new type of theatre" (8). As Davis explains in *Jack Davis- A Life Story*, he had been experimenting with theatre since 1972. In 1975, he attended a theatre workshop held in the Black Theatre, Redfern, Sydney, at the end of which all the participants were expected to produce

something. He considers this as his first venture into professional theatre. The play he wrote for this was *The Biter Bit*. Davis summarises its content as follows:

It is concerned with some Aborigines who come down to Sydney. The first white man they meet is a Sydney con-man who makes it fairly obvious that he is going to take in these settlement suckers. He promises to buy them some cassette-radios at a very cheap price if they will allow him to hold their money overnight. He collects their money and is carefully counting it when a mission-reared cousin arrives and borrows the money to go up to the bar and buy a couple of cartons of beer to bring back to the city slicker's flat. The Aborigines walk out with the beer and the money, and vanish. The slicker is confronted by the barman and asked to pay for the cartons. Of course, he no longer has any money. The barman winds up his boot and catapults the slicker out into the street (Chesson 179).

Jack Davis had been convinced that writing was the best means of influencing public opinion and bringing about an improvement in the Aboriginal situation and had published two books of poems *The First Born* and *Jagardoo*. He became interested in the possibilities of the theatre after seeing the script of a short play written by Kath Walker. He felt that theatre offered an opportunity to use all the talents of speech

and body movement present in Aboriginal oral literature and dance since time began and that it was an exciting way of reaching a wide audience (Chesson 191). "Theatre, in a bush arena, is the very essence of an Aboriginal corroboree and performances there are often full of brilliant dance and mime. There was and is great opportunity for theatre to draw upon the rich Aboriginal oral literature" (Chesson 197).

Davis started writing a long play called "The Steel and the Stone" which was to be the basis of a number of his other plays. One section of this play turned out to be *The Dreamers* performed in 1972 at the arts festival in Bunbury. The success of a four-month national tour of *The Dreamers* by the Elizabethan Theatre Trust doing 104 performances led to the commissioning of two more plays -- *No Sugar* and *Honey Spot*.

The Western Australian sesquicentenary celebration was the immediate context of the production of *Kullark*. Ignoring hundreds of thousands of years of Aboriginal occupation of the continent, the pamphlets advertising the event stated that man first came to Western Australia in 1829. Not only did this ignore the Aboriginal contribution to the development of the state, but the very existence of the Aborigines. Moreover, the sesquicentenary sponsored Dorothy Hewett's *The Man from Muckinupin* as its official play without even considering an Aboriginal playwright. Incensed by this attitude of the celebration committee (WAY '79) Davis wrote *Kullark* presenting an Aboriginal perspective on Western

Australia's history of a century and a half of white settlement. At the end of Act one the actors sing:

ALL. Now you primly say that you are justified
And sing of a nation's glory;
But I think of a people crucified,
The real Australian story. (1.9.39).

In his two plays *Kullark* and *The Dreamers*, Davis created what reviewer Billy Marshall-Stoneking terms a "symphonic folk drama" in which the life of his people is told not only through dialogue but through poetry, song, music, dance and pantomime (Stoneking).

Commissioned by the Australian Elizabethan Trust for the 1985 Perth festival, *No Sugar* was planned to tour Aboriginal communities and settlements of small country places, with audiences sitting all around in a circle, with hardly any special lighting effects and a minimum of props, with the dancers and actors moving through the audience (Chesson 207). The Maltings Theatre in East Perth, which was a great wooden barn formerly used as a warehouse for storing brewery materials, and had huge timber supports and secluded alcoves around the main theatre was used for the first production (Chesson 208). According to the reviewer, Barry Hill "[. . .] you couldn't imagine that play being performed anywhere but in a theatre that had the audience sitting on the floor and the players calling upon them to shift camp during the play".

Barungin was first performed in 1988, the bicentennial year celebrating two hundred years of white occupation and a time of mourning for many Aborigines. This play, meant to counter white euphoria was, according to Mudrooro, Jack Davis's gift to white Australia (viii). It is also set in the context of the contemporary event of John Pat's death and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal deaths in custody (Hodge xiii, Shoemaker 258). According to Jack Davis, though Aborigines only constitute one percent of the Australian population, they represent ten percent of prison inmates, a figure which more than triples in Western Australia (Turcotte, *Writers in Action* 182). John Pat's case was a notorious case of death in custody. Ruby Langford Ginibi in her book *Don't Take Your Love to Town* describes the circumstances under which John Pat was arrested:

John Pat sees a black man being hit by an off-duty policeman. Four other police join in, Pat tries to pull the black man away from the fight. A policeman punches him in the mouth. A witness: 'He fell back and didn't get up. I heard his head hit the road.'

Pat was picked up by the hair and kicked in the face. Witness: 'It was like a football kick'. They threw him in the van and went to the police station (256).

Later he was found dead in his cell.

A forensic pathologist found that Pat died from head injuries, which caused a brain haemorrhage. He had received ten blows to the head, half a dozen bruises above his right ear, his lips were cracked, there were scratches on his face, and he had two broken ribs and a tear in the aorta, the major blood vessel leading from the heart. A month later the policeman's clothes have been washed repeatedly. There are traces of blood on the clothes and boots. There is an inquest and two court cases (256).

The four police officers and one police aid, who were tried for manslaughter, were acquitted and reinstated to their positions in the police force. "John pat, at the time of his death, was only sixteen years of age. The coroner said the reason he died was because he had a particularly thin skull for an Aboriginal" (Davis, *Writers in Action* 183).

Speaking about his play *Barungin* Jack Davis points out that it was "[. . .] the way people have had to live, the way people had to survive . . ." (Davis, *Writers in Action* 186) and that writing it (*Barungin*) with anger he was able to spell out the story "[. . .] more clearly than if I had approached it in any other way" (Davis, *Writers in Action* 188). "[. . .] because of the deaths in custody I felt that there had to be some publicity outside what [white] people were reading in the newspapers" (Davis, *Writers in Action* 193).

While in *Kullark* the action moves from the kitchen of the Yorlah household in a country town in the South West of Western Australia in 1979, to a farm in the Pinjarra area between 1829 and 1834, the Moore River Native Settlement in the 1930s, the Yorlahs' chaff-bag humpy in 1945 (6), and deals with the history of a hundred and fifty years of Black/White relationships, *The Dreamers* is set "in the home of the Wallitch family, in South Western Australia" (6) in 1982 and *Barungin*, in Perth, Western Australia during 1988. Both *The Dreamers* and *Barungin* have an Aboriginal kitchen, living room and bedroom as its setting and chronicles the history of the urban Wallitch family. *No Sugar* set in Northam, in the Avon valley and the Moore River Native Settlement during the years 1929, (which marked the centenary of white settlement on the Swan River), to 1934 explores life on the Missions. *In Our Town* is set ten years after *No Sugar*, in 1946.

Kullark toured extensively in Western Australia for the Perth Playhouse Company. The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust toured the Playhouse Company's reproduction of *The Dreamers* for seventeen weeks around Australia adapting to venues as different as the Sydney Opera House and the Historic Theatre Royal in Hobart (Blacklock, foreword *No Sugar* 7). Davis has stated that the thirty performances of *The Dreamers* in which an "Aboriginal family kitchen" was up in the Sydney Opera House "will always stick in my memory and are a highlight of my career" (Chesson 204). *No Sugar*, was staged in a semi-promenade

setting in which the audience followed the players on their journey through the action of the play. At Vancouver's Expo '86 the play was performed alongside the Beijing People's Art Theatre from China and the Kirov Ballet from the USSR. In June/July 1988 *No Sugar* had an extremely successful season at the Riverside Studios in London (Shoemaker 268).

In May 1988 all three plays *No Sugar*, *The Dreamers* and *Barungin*, under the title *The First Born*, were linked by short scenes in a prologue, and performed in sequence at the Fitzroy Town Hall in Melbourne as a six-hour epic featuring 18 actors (Turcotte 182, Shoemaker 258). According to reviewer Dennis Davison, "the main impression of the trilogy is an authentic portrayal of everyday living, acted so naturally that we are absorbed . . . Davis is neither sentimental nor didactic but an honest realist" (qtd. in Shoemaker *Black Words* 258). Davis states that the way of life represented in the First Born trilogy "is the way many Aboriginal people live today in Perth" (Davis, *Writers in Action* 186). The observations made by Dibble and MacIntyre in the case of *No Sugar* is also applicable to the trilogy as a whole: that it is at the same time both protest play and documentary history, that they may be performed in a traditional Western stage setting but is equally effective in a bush setting as well and that while the plot is European in that it "presents a coherent and continuous narrative, [. . .] is distinctive for not having closure in the European sense, being an episodic series of unresolved confrontations in

which Aborigines are more agonists than protagonists or antagonists” (96).

Davis's plays which, “confront white and black audiences with a truthful, uncompromised picture of urban Aboriginal life” (Davis, *Meanjin* 46), are structured according to the principle of “Aboriginal Reality” as termed by Mudrooroo. They begin with a symbolic statement. This is followed by the central story or plotline in a naturalistic mode, which continues for some length before breaking down as the symbolic returns in strength (*Barungin* viii). *The Dreamers* makes a symbolic statement about the historical displacement and the resultant loss of identity of the Aborigines through the tribal family, and the presence of the Dancer takes the play into the symbolic level. In *Barungin* while the funeral service symbolises the theme of the play, the presence of mythic elements like the Dancer, the night hawk and the Magpies signals ‘Aboriginal reality’. In *Writing from the Fringe*, he points out that a “recognition of Aboriginal reality as stemming from the Dreaming or Dreamtime, is explicit or implicit and is a trait of Aboriginality. A state, either mental or mythical, [which] lies underneath the ordinary day-to-day consciousness of the Aboriginal character, which sometimes erupts [. . .] to give a surreal quality (172). Though Davis's plays are often seen as merely twentieth century naturalistic European Drama, according to Mudrooroo, “a recognition of an atemporal state in itself leads to mixed genre” (172). -- a hybrid.

Robert Hodge points out that the principle of repetition, whereby the same fundamental patterns recur, under different guises and in different circumstances; and the principle of circularity, which sees beginnings and ends meet in the closure of a circle, as two of the organising principles of Davis's plays (*Barungin* xiv). According to Carroll, *The First Born* trilogy evokes a feeling of repetition and of circularity: "Elements are picked up, carried on a little way, then dropped, to be picked up, repeated, pushed a little further until the landscape they occupy is completely filled in" (qtd. in Carroll 105). Hodge observes how, though *Barungin* begins and ends with a funeral, both are different. The Wallitch family in *Barungin* continues on from *The Dreamers* and the Millimurra family of *In Our Town* from that of *No Sugar* but no member is the same "yet the structures of the family and of Aboriginal tradition, with its powerful bonds of loyalty and its potential for anger and violence, have continued into the present, with new people [. . .] filling in new versions of old roles" (*Barungin* xiv).

Though Davis's plays opens with a reverie, the endings leave one with a feeling of a "progression into pessimism" (Elder 212). After chronicling a hundred and fifty years of Aboriginal experience *Kullark* ends hopefully with a song, which celebrates Aboriginality and their survival.

BLACK ACTOR. [. . .]

With murder, with rape, you marred her skin,

But you cannot whiten her mind.

They will remain my children forever,

The black and the beautiful kind.

The black and the beautiful kind. (2.6.66)

In *No Sugar*, as the Magpies squawk, Joe and Mary with their baby leave Moore River Settlement and their relatives, to an uncertain future. The translation of Gran's farewell song, which ends the play speaks only of woe.

Woe, woe, woe.

My boy and girl and baby

Going a long way walking,

That way walking,

That way walking.

Pity, pity, pity,

Hungry, walking, hungry,

Pity, pity, pity,

Hungry, hungry,

Walking, walking, walking,

Yay, yay, yay,

Cooo-ooo-ooo-oooh. (110)

The Dreamers, which ends with an elegy to Uncle Worru, recognizes the end of the traditional identity he stood for.

DOLLY. I will let you dream -- dream on old friend

Of a child and a man in September,

Of hills and stars and the river's bend;

Alas, that is all to remember. (2.7.79)

Barungin ends with the images of "the concrete floor . . . a cell door . . . and *John Pat*" (2.9.60) and a grim list of Aborigines who died in custody during the two hundred years of white settlement, read out by Meena.

However *In Our Town* shows miscegenation as one possible means for future reconciliation between cultures. While the children's play *Honey Spot* "explores the possibility of reconciliation through an exchange of experience and cultural capital" (Gilbert, *Jack Davis* 69), *Moorli and the Leprechaun* ends with the notion of shared responsibility.

MOORLI. We live in our land

You and I, one another,

And the land and the sun

Is our Father and Mother.

Be kind and respectful whatever you do

Because we are the guardians

Me, you and you, me, you and you

Me, you and you. (1.20.57)

Both *Honey Spot* and *Moorli and the Leprechaun* speak of friendship between an Aboriginal boy and a White girl, which may be taken as a model for the kind of harmony that could exist if prejudice did not get in the way of friendship. Both plays provide a positive, optimistic view of the potential for intercultural understanding in Australia. ("Honey Spot" *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*)

But his unpublished monodrama *Wahngin Country* remains dark throughout. After repeating some of the poetic pieces, which appeared earlier, in *The Dreamers* and *Kullark*, and which reflected the various stages of the tribal family, it ends with:

So leave us now to continue our crying,

There's nothing left for us now but the terror of dying (22).

Wahngin Country (Talking Country), [unpublished] was workshopped by the Black Swan Theatre Company, with Andrew Ross as the director. A one-man show about an itinerant drifter, Michael Pedro Sebastian, commonly known as Old Mick, it is based on incidents in the writer's past observations of friends and relatives as well as anecdotes from the life of the Broome actor Stephen Baamba Albert (Black), who played the

part. Mick's world is confined to a bench in a Perth inner city park, where he had been living on and off for twenty years. The park is now "his territory, his domain" (qtd. in Farmer).

A musician plays music -- didgeridoo and clapsticks -- in full view of the audience. Many of Davis's poems are included in this play and are used "to take us back into Mick's memory and deep into the moods and feelings of Aboriginal people" (Farmer). According to Ross, it also "opens a window into Mick's mind and adds a new level to the writing" (Farmer). While the reading was staged with a park bench, dustbin and a drift of dead leaves in the vast expanse of the octagon theatre, for the Festival it was set, late at night, under a tree in the grounds of the University of Western Australia (Farmer)

In many of his plays the cluttered and impoverished domestic interior, in which the Aboriginal family subsists is contrasted with the openness of outdoor spaces where the chant and dance or corroboree takes place (Carroll 106). In *Kullark*, Yagan and family are depicted as occupying the outdoor spaces and only the settlers occupy the interior (a hut). While in the 1930's the Yorlah family in *Kullark* and the Millimurra's in *No Sugar* occupy bag humpies in camping areas, the contemporary families in *Kullark*, *The Dreamers* and *Barungin* are shown wholly indoors. In *In Our Town* the park increasingly starts featuring as an aboriginal space while *Wahngin Country* is set wholly in the park with

the park bench as the Aboriginal space. The motif of a physical journey through space, allied with the nomadic need as well as enforced journeys arising out of dispossession and displacement is also built into the structure and form of the plays.

Another feature is a sense of self-deprecating humour -- the singular capacity to smile even while the figurative hurricane strikes. According to Jack Davis, historically Aborigines "learnt to keep themselves alive by laughing" (qtd. in *Black Words* 233). Stanner has noted that the Aborigines have:

[. . .] the humour that is often one of endearment, often one of familiarity . . . it equates people with other people, people with animals and what have you . . . you'll find that even in urban situations Aboriginal people can recognize somebody way down the street by the way they walk. Because they know peoples' walks and mannerisms. And those things are more noticed by, and more remembered by, Aborigines than they are by white people (qtd. in *Black Words* 234)

According to Shoemaker, Aboriginal humour derives from the traditions and particular skills of Aborigines, and from such themes as religion, alcohol and gambling. It frequently deflates pretensions, especially those of White Australians and of 'white-thinking' Aborigines",

through “the mimicry and mockery of whites and the humorous celebration of their own lifestyle” (*Black Words* 233).

Actors/Audience

Davis’s first professional acting was during the workshop held in the Black Theatre, Redfern, during which they were required to act a part in a play other than one’s own and he describes his role in his biography:

A young Aboriginal girl hitchhikes from the Northern Territory, arrives in Redfern and finds her way into a pub. I have the job of warning her about the philandering qualities of a white man with whom she has picked up. She is a fresh young girl and her companion, not very keen to give up a good thing, knocks me down. . . . Another young Koorie comes into the fray and knocks the other man down (Chesson 179).

Later Jack Davis acted as uncle Worru in *The Dreamers*. To Ernie Dingo, on stage Davis seemed to be “the spirit of every Aboriginal elder before him”. “This cheeky old man, who was full of spirit and laughter, tormented the audience and called them into his heart from where he spoke. It occurred to me that he wasn’t acting. His portrayal was real. Jack was saying the very words he wanted to he heard” (*Jack Davis* 76). Ernie Dingo describes a scene in which Davis as Uncle Worru wakes up, coughs a heavy smoker’s cough and spits (as his character was meant to

do). He notes that, the audience always gasped in horror. "I'd laugh at their reaction and think kindly of the old men of my past he epitomised. He was showing the reality of the aged men who lived with dirt floors in makeshift dwellings. Poverty is never pretty and death has never required social graces. (Dingo 76-77).

Jack Davis acted as tracker in *No Sugar*. According to reviewer Barry Hill,

he was the strong presence but he did not dominate. His voice had that Aboriginal evenness that is at first easily mistaken for passivity, but the moment he began to move about and speak, his centrality was clear. Somehow he managed to be the playwright on stage, managing his own lines, the actor of a part in the play, and a modern tribal elder all in one. -- a rich and complex presence (Hill).

Ernie Dingo remembers that Davis also had "to provide the linking music, with the harmonica, between each scene from wherever he was on the stage" (77) and "would play whatever he felt like playing at the time" (78).

The production cast for *The Dreamers* consisted entirely of Aboriginal people, which included Davis's nephews, nieces and grannies (Ernie Dingo 74). Ernie dingo speaks of their lack of training:

We had no theatrical training to become actors, but his scripts were so close to our upbringing there was no need for

training. We did it like we lived it. And we were proud to know that no theatre training school in Australia could teach us to act like the Aborigines that he wanted us to be. Proud, upstanding and family. Together. (*Jack Davis 78*).

Davis's advice to them was to "be yourself, if not, look for someone you know in your own family and play them" (*Dingo 78*). Davis himself says: "We were all pretty untrained actors but we had one important thing working for us. Most of our cast had lived the life portrayed in the play; all they had to do was relax and be themselves" (*Chesson 198*). And about their lack of "professionalism", of breaking the "rules of theatre" Ernie Dingo comments:

We thought nothing of switching from being our larrikin selves, spinning yarns, teasing and joking even in the wings, to instantly becoming our characters with just one step on to the stage. We believed in what we were doing, we just did it in a different way (*76*).

After the performance of *The Dreamers* Davis mentions how, unable to believe that "stalwarts of early [White] society such as Bussell and Molloy would ever have killed Aborigines", some extremely shocked society ladies called him a liar, a twister of facts (*Chesson 195*). He goes on to affirm the fact that Bussell did shoot and kill an Aboriginal girl of nine and that Colonel Molloy did lead a revenge party for the death of

George Layman, "Scouring the district destroying blacks by the dozen [. . .]" and lining the route with their corpses.

Citing Narogin, Carroll points out that while White audiences tend to see the stylized scenes as discursions from, and interruptions to, the pervasive realistic mode of the plays; the Aboriginals, expect more basic repetition of motifs, dialogue, idea, and stylistic nodal points in a theatrical performance, just like the repetitions in traditional chants and the 'sung' part of the corroboree (106).

Hodge and Mishra point out that, while Aboriginal audiences respond to the bawdy realism and earthy dialogue of the plays with the joy of recognition, and a sense of release from the disabling and oppressive stereotype, Whites are given the privilege of entry into intimate areas of Aboriginal life, but with voices and meanings left unexplained and mysterious to the monolingual Whites. Moreover, his theatrical strategy intermittently disables the whites, by juxtaposing the limits of their monologic state to the dialogic mode of Aboriginal culture. (Hodge and Mishra 108-9).

After watching *The Dreamers* at the Twelfth Night Theatre, Brisbane, Queensland, with Jack Davis playing the role of Uncle Worru, Oodgeroo Noonuccal describes the play as "an outstanding piece of live theatre" (20). She remembers that when asked for her opinion, an actor of non-Aboriginal descent "was lost for words and in a confused way answered 'Well, it's different isn't it?' " while the Aborigines in the

audience had been rolling with laughter at the snide jokes that only Aborigines could understand. According to Noonuccal, "it came through very clearly in *The Dreamers* that non-Aborigines know little or nothing about our ways" (20).

Speaking of the performance of *The Dreamers* Davis says how as Dolly completed her lines:

I will let you dream--dream on old friend
Of a child and a man is September,
Of hills and stars and the river's bend;
Alas that is all to remember. (2.7.79)

he had "the satisfaction of seeing more than one colonial descendant wipe away a self-conscious tear" (Chesson 198).

After performances he noticed how the Nyoongahs in the audience didn't want to go home -- "it was their first experience of genuine Aboriginal theatre" (Chesson 199). Davis remembers how he could always sense when there were Aboriginal people in the audience by "a laugh here or there in the theatre, and a slightly different reaction to a situation [. . .] "The Aborigines in the audience were always deeply moved to see themselves in the characters up on stage" (Chesson 203).

Speaking about Aboriginal responses to the play Davis observes: "They were seeing something they could identify with. Some were a little cautious of what they saw, especially those living in comfortable

circumstances, in as much as they saw it as a condemnation of themselves (Davis, *Meanjin* 47).

In *Barungin* the Aboriginal members of the audience: “were aware of the fact that these things had happened to their people, but to see it, as it were in a third dimensional effect, which theatre does offer us, I think it had a tremendous impact upon Aboriginal viewers” (Davis, *Writers in Action* 186). Shoemaker has observed that barriers between the audience and the players break down as Uncle Peegun and Shane actually busk for the theatre patrons and pass around the hat afterwards, saying “You look like a rich mob of people” (*Black Words* 258)

People also remarked upon the seemingly natural acting ability of the Aboriginal cast, for they were playing out their own experiences using their own speech and behavioural patterns (Davis, *Meanjin* 45).

Gilbert and Tompkins defines post colonial performance as:

- acts that respond to the experience of imperialism, whether directly or indirectly;
- acts performed for the continuation and/or regeneration of colonized (and sometimes pre-contact) communities;
- acts performed with the awareness of, and sometimes the incorporation of, post-contact forms; and
- acts that interrogate the hegemony that underlies imperial representation (*Post colonial Drama* 11).

Davis through his plays contests colonialism's discourses, power structures and social hierarchies, and is part of a "politically motivated, historical-analytical movement [which] engages with, resists and seeks to dismantle the effects of colonialism in, the material, historical, cultural-political, pedagogical, discursive and textual domains" (qtd. in Gilbert and Tompkins 2). He foregrounds difference as a marker of identity, voice, and hence empowerment. Textual gaps produced by the colonial encounter and by the system of writing are also foregrounded. He reacts to the imperial hegemony through canonical counter discourse, historical recuperation and through decentring manipulations of the English language. History, language, song, music, and dance are all sites of resistance.

Jack Davis's theatre is syncretic. Christopher Balme has introduced the concept of syncretic theatre to describe the interplay between the Western theatrico-dramatic tradition and the indigenous performance forms of a postcolonial culture. The term borrowed from religious syncretism is usually an extended process brought about by friction and interchange between cultures. Theatrical syncretism, according to him, is in most cases a conscious, programmatic strategy to fashion a new form of theatre in the light of colonial or postcolonial experience. It is very often written and performed in a Europhone language but almost always manifests varying degrees of bi- or multi-lingualism. In his opinion, Syncretic theatre is one of the most effective

means of decolonising the stage utilizing as it does the performance forms of both European and indigenous cultures in a creative recombination of their respective elements without slavish adherence to the one tradition or the other. It relies heavily on non-dialogic communicative devices: on dance, music, song, iconography and indigenous languages. (Balme 42).

However, I would use the term Theatre of Hybridisation to refer to the theatre of Jack Davis, which is structured in 'Aboriginal reality, though it makes use of Western theatrical conventions. Mudrooroo observes:

Aboriginal drama often begin with [. . .] a symbolic statement and this is followed by the central story or plotline in a naturalistic mode which continues for some length before breaking down as the 'symbolic' returns in strength. I term this method of structure 'Aboriginal reality' ("Black Reality" x)

Boulton sets down two kinds of conventions – "those that make for the intensity and concentration of drama, the violent impact; and those that protect the audience from too violent an experience or that are enforced by mere physical possibility" (Boulton 4). Both kinds are there in Davis's plays.

Davis's plays follow the unity of action but not always the unities of time and place. He divides his plays into acts and scenes and makes

use of devices like coincidences, look outs, letters, flashbacks, narration of events and overhearing of conversations, use of contrasts, surprises, effective silences. Characters are portrayed through what other people say about them, by the nature of the people making the comments and by their own words and actions and are differentiated through their individual speech characteristics like pronunciation, choice of words, sentence construction, tact or lack of it, explicitness, delicacy of language or otherwise (Boulton 110).

In a naturalistic play, the convention is that speech and action should as closely as possible appear to be those of everyday life. Actors represent people behaving naturally, and usually privately, before a large audience, while all the time maintaining the illusion that, as characters, these persons are unaware of the audience's presence. (Raymond Williams 4). But as Mudrooroo describes, Davis's plays are polysemic in nature:

Jack Davis's plays are often accepted as merely examples of twentieth century naturalistic European drama; but I see this as a white reading in that this way the symbolic aspects are relegated to secondary motifs – attempts to break free of the format -- rather than being of primary importance. I do not see them as devices to break down 'realist' frame, but as integral parts pointing to the polysemic nature of Aboriginal drama. ("Black Reality" ix)

Rooted in Aboriginal ritual, his plays are inescapably communal and are cathartic; is educative and is part of a struggle for a better future.

WORKS CITED

- Balme, Christopher. 'Between separation and integration: Contemporary Maori theatre'. *CRNLE Reviews Journal* 1:41-8.
- Berndt, Ronald M. and Catherine H. *The World of the First Australians: Aboriginal Traditional life: Past and Present*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1996.
- Blacklock, Wendy. Foreword. *No Sugar* by Jack Davis. Sydney: Currency Press, 1986. 7-8.
- Bostock, Gerry. "Black theatre." *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985. 63-73.
- Boulton, Marjorie. *The Anatomy of Drama*. 1960. London: Routledge, 1968.
- Brisbane, Katherine. The Future in Black and White: Aboriginality in Recent Australian Drama." 27 Dec 2000 <<http://www.currency.com.au/inthfu.html>>
- Carroll, Dennis. "Some Defining Characteristics of Australian Aboriginal Drama." *Modern Drama*. 40 (1977): 100-110.
- "The Cake Man." *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*. Ed. David Horton. 2 vols. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994.
- "The Cherry Pickers." *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*. Ed. David Horton. 2 vols. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994.
- Chesson, Keith. *Jack Davis: A Life Story*. Melbourne: Dent, 1988.

Davis, Jack and Bob Hodge. ed. *Aboriginal Writing Today* (Papers from the First National Conference of Aboriginal Writers, held at Murdoch University February 1983). Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985.

Davis, Jack. "Barungin (Smell the Wind)." *Writers in Action: The Writer's Choice Evenings*. by Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Currency Press, 1990. 179-202.

---. *Barungin (Smell the Wind)*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1989.

---. "The Dreamers." *Meanjin* 43.1 (1984): 44-48.

---. *The Dreamers*. 1982. Sydney: Currency Press, 1996.

---. *Honey Spot*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1987.

---. *In Our Town*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1992.

---. *Kullark/The Dreamers*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1982.

---. *Moorli and the Leprechaun*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1994.

---. *No Sugar*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1986.

---. *Plays from Black Australia*. 1989. Sydney: Currency Press, 1997.

---. *Wahngin Country*. ts. Black Swan Theatre Company. Unpublished play. First Performed in Perth in 1992.

Dingo, Ernie. "Breaking the Rules of Theatre: Discovering Aboriginality Through Performance". *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994. 72-78.

- Elder, Arlene A. "Self, Other and Post-Historical Identity in Three Plays by Jack Davis." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 25 (1990): 204-15.
- Farmer, Alison. Rev. of *Wahngin Country* by Jack Davis. "Chapter and Verse on Life from a Perth Park Bench." *Weekend Australian*. 30.Nov. -1 Dec. 1991. Rev. 9.
- Gilbert, Helen and Joanne Tompkins. *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Gilbert, Helen. "'Talking Country: Place and Displacement in Jack Davis's Theatre.'" *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994. 60-71.
- Hill, Barry. "The Life that Jack Built." Rev. of *John Pat and Other Poems* by Jack Davis and *Jack Davis: A Life Story* by Keith Chesson. *Age Saturday Extra*. 14 Jan. 1989.1
- Hodge, Bob and Vijay C. Mishra. *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991.
- Hodge, Robert. "The Artist as Hunter." *Barungin (Smell the Wind)*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1989. xi-xv.
- Horton, David. ed. *Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*. 2 vols. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994.
- Johnson, Colin. "White Forms, Aboriginal Content." *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Ed. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian

- Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985. 21-33.
- Langford, Ruby. *Don't Take Your Love to Town*. Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1988.
- Lewis, Berwyn. "Smelling the Winds of Injustice." *Weekend Australian* 26-27 Nov. 1988 Magazine 7-8.
- Marshall-Stoneking, Billy. "The Enduring Quality of a Beleaguered Race." Rev. of *Kullark/The Dreamers* by Jack Davis. *Weekend Australian* 20-21 Aug. 1983. 14.
- Mc Naughton, Howard. "Drama (Overview)." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W.Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994. 367-370.
- Merritt, Robert J. *The Cakeman*. 1978. Rev. ed. 1983. Sydney: Currency Press, 1995.
- Mudrooroo. "Black Reality." *Barungin (Smell the wind)*. Jack Davis. Sydney: Currency Press, 1989. viii-ix.
- Mudrooroo. *Writing from the Fringe: A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature*. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1990.
- Muecke, Stephen, Jack Davis and Adam Shoemaker. "Aboriginal Literature." *Penguin New Literary History of Australia*. Ed. Laurie Hergenhan. Melbourne: Penguin, 1988. 27-46.
- Nelson, Emmanuel S. ed. *Connections: Essays on Black Literatures*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988.

- . "Black America and the Australian Aboriginal Literary consciousness." *Westerly* 4 Dec. (1985): 43-54.
- Noonuccal, Oodgeroo. "To My Brother Jack Davis: A Tribute." *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994. 16-21.
- Parson, Philip with Victoria Chance. Ed. *Concise Companion to Theatre in Australia*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1997.
- Schechner, Richard. "From Ritual to Theatre and Back: The Structure/Process of the Efficacy-Entertainment Dyad." *Performative Circumstances from the Avant Garde to Ramlila*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1983. 124-163.
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. New Delhi: Peacock, 2000.
- Shoemaker, Adam. *Black Words, White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989.
- Turcotte, Gerry. "'The Maker of History': Jack Davis- An Introduction." *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994. 1-15.
- . Ed. *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994.
- . *Writers in Action: The Writer's Choice Evenings*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1990.
- Watego, Cliff. *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds.

Eugene Benson and L.W.Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994.

Williams, Raymond. *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht: A Critical Account and Revaluation*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968.

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

Chapter III

The Real Australian Story

Now you primly say you're justified

And sing of a nation's glory;

But I think of a people crucified,

The real Australian story.

(Davis, "Aboriginal Australia" 13)

Rewriting History

To the colonialist, history was considered to determine reality itself (108) but Denning points out that, "History is not the past: it is a consciousness of the past used for present purposes" (qtd. in Gilbert and Tompkins 106). To Barthes, it is "a play of structures just like language . . . itself also a form of *écriture*" (qtd. in Arthur 58). Today, history is seen as a discourse open to interpretation like any other narrative discourse (Gilbert and Tompkins 106). The concept of historical objectivity is shown to be a myth and emphasis is given to heterogeneity of representations. With European colonization, local indigenous histories were replaced with Euro centric accounts of the past (106) and were reclassified as myths and legends; instead written official versions of history were validated (Gilbert and Tompkins 107). Alternatives to the official narratives were suppressed through massacres and even genocide (107).

Aborigines were written out of literature, out of law, out of history, by means of documents written in the English language (Arthur 55). This occurred due to the absence of indigenous writing to act as a counterforce (Arthur 56). Kateryna Arthur views the unequal struggle between black and white in Australia as the struggle between literacy and orality (55) which can only be rectified by the Aborigines rewriting their history in English from an Aboriginal point of view. A reassessment of history becomes a political endeavour in that it is an act of anti colonial resistance (108).

History and Drama are both based on a conscious selection, organization and presentation of events. Theatre is well suited to “the interrogation of spatial and temporal (teleological) aspects of imperialism and facilitates the telling/showing of oppositional versions of the past” through visual and oral signifiers embedded in the text as performance (Gilbert and Tompkins 109). Davis makes use of the possibilities of this medium to contest the messages of history. By enacting the Aboriginal versions of the pre-contact, imperial and post imperial past on stage (Gilbert and Tompkins 107), and by presenting key events in an Aboriginal context, history is revaluated and redeployed. By foregrounding the Aboriginal historical perspectives Davis’s plays disperse the authority inherent in official accounts (Gilbert and Tompkins 108). While addressing the foundations of colonialism he also looks at the ways in which a continued colonial authority had been

sanctioned by official historical accounts (Gilbert and Tompkins 109).

Davis's play *Kullark* dramatises events from the history of the south west of Western Australia, during the early period of contact, the protection and assimilation eras, to the contemporary urban Aboriginal situation. *No Sugar* depicts life on the Reserve during the 1930s Depression, forced removal of Aborigines to Moore River and life there. *In Our Town* looks at the same Millimurra family ten years later in 1946, living on the fringes of a town. While *The Dreamers* deals with the contemporary urban Aboriginal Wallitch family of 1982, *Barungin* looks at the same family in 1988. Starting from the story of Mitjitjiroo, Moyrahn and their son Yagan of 1820s in *Kullark*, it moves on to Thomas and Mary Yorlah, in Act two of *Kullark* and Sam and Milly Millimurra in *No sugar*. *In our Town* tells the story of David Millimurra, a returning Aboriginal serviceman. The contemporary scene is depicted through the story of the families of Alec and Rosie in *Kullark*, Roy and Dolly in *The Dreamers* and Arnie and Meena in *Barungin*. The five plays taken together depict an epic of Aboriginal history.

In *Nyoongah*, the major Aboriginal language of the south west of Western Australia, the term "kullark" literally means home, the place where fire is made (v). It is believed that Warrgul, the Rainbow Serpent, considered to be the creative spirit of the Swan River, emerged from beneath the ground and moved over the land creating the Darling Ranges and the Swan River, before resting at *Kargallup*, (corrupted to

Karrakatta, now Perth) (Glossary *Kullark* 145). According to Davis, Warrgul the Rainbow Serpent represents the generation and regeneration of life (Chesson 194) and “the hegemony of Aboriginal land and culture” (Carroll 105). In Act One Scene two of *Kullark*, Yagan (a totemic name meaning “freshwater turtle” (*Kullark* 146)), in ceremonial paint chants and dances this Dreaming event. With precise description of the landscape, perceived as the body of the totemic being, and acknowledgement of the abundant gifts of flora and fauna, laws and legends and sacred places, Yagan names *Karta Koomba* (identified as Mount Eliza, the highest point in an area surrounded by marshes, plains and the Swan River, with a running fresh water spring at its foot) and *Kargattup* (the area surrounding *Karta Koomba*) as his home. Strongly identifying himself with this landscape which has spiritual significance for him, Yagan moved within its boundaries, fixed and validated by the movements of his ancestral spirit Warrgul.

YAGAN. And as you went into the sunset

Two rocks you left to mark your passing,

To tell of your returning

And our affinity. (*Kullark* 1.2.12)

Yagan’s chant in *Kullark*, which began with *Woolah*, a shout of praise in *Nyoongah*, ends with the wail of *wirilo*, *wirilo* when he laments the coming of the *Jungara* (‘returned dead’, as the whites were first thought to be) from across the ocean “to decimate and kill” (*Kullark* 1.2.12).

In the scene described above, we have the Aboriginal map of the country in Yagan's chant and dance, in his body painting and on the backdrop which is "a painting in neo traditional style of Warrgul the Rainbow Serpent in the shape of a map of the Swan River" (*Kullark* 6). Gilbert and Tompkins observes that by situating the landscape within an Aboriginal cosmology this map shows that it is not an empty space awaiting the settlers' inscriptions. (148). By showing that the two cultures interacted, that territory was contested and that Aborigines were displaced, and disenfranchised, Davis goes on to challenge the pioneer myth which ignores the possibility that Aborigines and whites moved in the same landscape (Gilbert. *Jack Davis* 71).

The revolving screen through which Charles Fraser, the botanist and Captain James Stirling enter in Act One Scene three, cuts the Rainbow Serpent near the tail, thus symbolising the disruption of traditional life by the British invasion; and the flip side of the screen reveals a water colour of the Swan River in 1827. Generally assumed to contain unbiased scientific knowledge, maps mark out boundaries and as suggested by J.B. Harley represent "a plan or at least a desire to occupy and own particular territories" (qtd. In Gilbert, *Jack Davis* 64). Here Davis demonstrates how cartography functions as an aid to colonisation. The stylised serpent image questions the supposed mimeticism of the Western map and juxtaposes different versions of history. It also exposes the processes through which subjective and

contingent models of "reality" are passed off as objective and universal representations (Gilbert and Tompkins 148). In spite of being continually cut by such maps and other signs of imperial presence -- represented on the flip side of the revolving screen through which the colonisers enter -- the Rainbow Serpent remains the dominant image of the set and is restored each time the actors representing the colonisers exit. As Davis himself observes, "enough members of the public picked up the message and symbolism of Warrgul -- the promise of an Aboriginal rebirth -- for *Kullark* to become popular" (Chesson 195).

The meeting of people from the two different cultures is marked by misunderstandings, especially with the language barrier. When Fraser and Stirling, eagerly scouting the Swan River valley in Western Australia in 1824, for possible colonial settlement, encounter the Aborigines Mitjitjiroo, Moyrahn and Yagan, both parties are taken by surprise, are frightened, curious and cautious. The Aborigines believed that at *Watjerup* (Rottnest Island) the soul of the dead "shed its dark skin and appeared white" (Glossary *Kullark* 142). Hence when they first meet Mitjitjoroo rubs Stirling's hand vigorously to ascertain that his skin is white not painted white and expresses astonishment at the strange appearance of the Europeans. This gesture "denaturalises the white body as the dominant sign of humanity" (Gilbert and Tompkins 209). The dialogue between the two parties carried out in two different languages is incomprehensible to each other and masks common, human feelings.

But the fact that, the Aborigines speak entirely in the Nyoongah language foreground their cultural autonomy and independence.

Casting a death wish on Stirling and Fraser, Moyrahn “marks the ground in front of them with her wahna, and gestures to the sky” (1.3.15). She repeats the same gesture on her first encounter with the settlers too, who according to her “smell of death” (*Kullark* 1.5.19). Gilbert opines that by this gesture of marking the ground, Moyrahn is inscribing her priority over the land, and that hence the depiction of the moment of contact in *Kullark* may be seen as a territorial dispute (*Jack Davis* 63). Without their military support the invaders are shown at a disadvantage.

Stirling’s report summarising his encounter with the Aborigines for his superiors in England exemplifies the misunderstandings brought about by discourses of racial otherness (Elder 210). He says: “The natives are fascinated by the colour of our skin, believing it to be painted white, but care must be taken in all dealings with them, for they are vengeful and capricious and will not hesitate to resort to offensive weapons” (*Kullark* 1.3.15).

In her letter of 1829 an Irish pioneering woman Alice, expresses her excitement over the plans to set sail on the *Parmelia* for the Swan River Colony; over the prospect of a new life, and of the expedition, to be headed by Captain Stirling including a detachment of the sixty-third regiment for protection (*Kullark* 1.5.18). Though early documents prove

that it all began with the intention of dealing fairly with the original inhabitants of the land it ended up in their dispossession and destruction. As the Governor of Western Australia, it is by the authority vested in him by His Majesty the King, that Stirling authorises "William Patrick O'Flaherty [settler] to take up a selection of one thousand acres [of Aboriginal land] on the Upper Swan River" (*Kullark* 1.5.18). Captain Stirling himself is said to have appropriated some 100,000 acres of land on the banks of the Swan River (Chesson 52, Whyard).

The history of development in Black-White relationship may also be traced through the voice of the settlers in the play *Kullark*. Alice, in her letter of 1830 describes the natives who frequent her encampment "as black as ink and clad only in the scantiest of garments fashioned from the skins of animals, [. . .] jabber[ing] away to each other in a language that would cause Meg and the children a great deal of mirth" (*Kullark* 1.5.20). In her later diary entry she speaks of the prudence of sharing their food supplies with the natives "to avoid the risk of it being taken by force" (*Kullark* 1.5.22) and in 1832 expresses her fear and anguish over "a number of incidents [. . .] resulting in the deaths of natives" and of Yagan's involvement "in all this terrible violence. [. . .] Lives are being lost for a mere sheep or a bag of flour" (*Kullark* 1.7.25) she writes. The setting up the Militia force by Stirling, and the establishment of an exclusively black prison on Rottnest Island points to the effectiveness of Aboriginal resistance and the fearful mood of the

colonialists. In 1834 the struggle in the Murray River reached a climax in the "Battle of Pinjarra" (Robinson and York 79).

According to Hodge and Mishra "for most of the history of European – Aboriginal relations, colonial policy has been driven more by ideological than by material considerations" and the Aborigine is constructed out of a double impulse of fear of revenge and desire for the security of legitimacy (25). According to the eighteenth century British imperial policy, officially, the Aboriginal peoples did not exist, while each Australian state developed its own policy in the nineteenth century. Andrew Armitage in his book *Comparing the Policy of Assimilation: Australia, Canada and New Zealand*, divides Australian policy towards Aboriginal peoples into four principal periods: (1) initial contact, 1788-1930; (2) protected status, 1860-1930; (3) assimilation, 1930-70; and (4) integration with limited self-management, 1967- (Armitage 14). He points out that during first settlement in Australia, which was an experiment in criminology and colonialism, the land needed was obtained by an act of dispossession, assisted in British law by the convenient assumption that Australia was *Terra nullius*. Aboriginal peoples recognised exactly what had happened and from the beginning there was determined Aboriginal resistance to the loss of their land. "They were poor now. White men had taken their good country, they said, no ask for it but took it. Black man show white man plenty grass and water and then white man say come be off and drive them away and no let them stop" (qtd. in Armitage 16). As

Armitage puts it, dispossession without negotiation, compensation or recognition was characteristic of the Australian frontier.

In *Kullark* we find that, based on the conclusions drawn from his encounter with the Aborigines during his explorations, Stirling formulated his policy in dealing with the natives: i.e. "to avoid all possible means of quarrel with them, and the necessity consequent thereon of rendering them hostile to future settlers in revenge for the severe measures we should be obliged to take, if put to our defense" (1.3.15). On settlement, Stirling's announcement "that any person or persons acting in a fraudulent, cruel or felonious manner towards the Aboriginal race, will be prosecuted and tried for the offence as if the same had been committed against any other of His Majesty's subjects" (*Kullark* 1.5.19) promises the protection of British justice to Aborigines. But his later proclamation stressed the urgency of establishing a militia force for "the safety of the Colony from invasion and from the attack of hostile native tribes" (*Kullark* 1.5.21) and urges "all male persons whatsoever between the ages of fifteen and fifty [. . .] to enrol themselves in the militia of the country" [. . .] "in the defense of the lives and property of the inhabitants of the territory" (1.5.21) points to a different situation.

Each encounter between the settlers and the Aborigines is followed by a proclamation by Stirling, which according to Elder disrupts their attempts to communicate and help each other (Elder 208). In a dramatized episode of 1830 we find the two groups trying to learn each

other's languages, trading flour and fish and establishing friendly relationships. But later in Private Jenkins' reminder to Will and Alice we see that "the Government has forbidden settlers to give flour to the natives" who have "to go down to the official rationing station" for it (*Kullark* 1.7.26).

Jenkin's attitude, and attempts to give Yagan "a bit of a fright" (*Kullark* 1.7.27) show how tribesmen around the Murray River and Swan districts were provoked into violent resistance by "trigger happy" colonialists.

JENKINS. You go! Get off, I said.

[*JENKINS fires a shot into the air. YAGAN drops his fish and flees. JENKINS picks up the fish, laughing.*]

WILL. There was no need to do that, was there?

JENKINS. [*handing the fish to WILL*] Only language they understand, sir. (*Kullark* 1.7.27)

When Jenkins arrests Yagan, fearing retribution from the natives, through a proclamation Stirling sends Yagan "under armed guard to Carnac Island, there to be instructed in Christianity and the British way of life" (*Kullark* 1.7.29). After they escape and spear two white men in Fremantle, through another proclamation Stirling declares both Mitjitjiroo and Yagan as outlaws, deprived of "the protection of British law" and offers "a reward of thirty pounds to any person producing their bodies dead or alive" (*Kullark* 1.7.31). Exploding the white Australian

myth of a peaceful settlement on an unoccupied land, Davis here points out that a state of war existed between the invaders and the Aborigines and that in Western Australia, Midgegooroo and his kinsman Yagan figured prominently in the struggles of the early years.

On Yagan's arrest, in his letter to the Governor, pleading for "mercy and understanding in dealings with the native Yagan" the settler Will expresses his concern "for the possible consequences, should Yagan be executed" and fear that "the militia cannot afford sufficient protection against attack" (*Kullark* 1.7.28). Alice in her letters speaks of Yagan's escape from Carnac Island in May 1833, of Jenkins's body being found in a well soon after, of the capture and execution of Mitjitjiroo after which his body was hung for public viewing (*Kullark* 1.7.31), of Yagan's death in July 1833, brought about by two boys aged eighteen and thirteen, who had befriended him and shared his hearth and food before shooting him, and of how a settler "hacked off Yagan's head with a knife and skinned the body to souvenir his tribal markings" (*Kullark* 1.7.33).

The letter to the English scientist Mr. T.J. Pettigrew, enclosed in the box containing the head of an Aboriginal native, preserved by "smok[ing] in the stump of a tree for three months", claims it to be that of Yagan and hopes that "this piece will prove of phrenological interest and a worthwhile addition to your collection" (*Kullark* 1.7.33). According to Gilbert and Tompkins, the decapitated Aborigine points to the inhumanity of the invaders and operates as part of a strategic critique of

imperialism's policies and practices (223). Moreover, as the key signifier of cultural and racial difference, skin, according to Bhabha is the most visible of fetishes. Hence, "the mutilated black body [skinned for its tribal markings] functions within the colonising culture as a fetishised object" (*Post colonial Drama* 209).

Different representations of Yagan are given in *Kullark*. In one of her diary entries in 1829, Alice speaks of Yagan as a native who is intelligent enough to have learned several words of English (*Kullark* 1.5.22), Will's letter to the Governor, after Yagan's arrest in 1833 describes him as being "possessed of noble instincts, and a sense of justice that would do credit to any British citizen" (*Kullark* 1.7.28), while the letter to the English Scientist says that "he was believed to have been a leader of his people and ever disposed to violent and criminal activity. His nature was sullen, implacable and ill-tempered, in short a most complete and savage villian" (*Kullark* 1.7.33). According to Jack Davis, Yagan was a natural Aboriginal leader, a great orator among a people with a strong oral tradition, accomplished in law and religion, master of ceremonies during corroborees, politically astute, intellectually, morally and physically courageous (Chesson 191). Davis felt that, Yagan, who tried to convey to the settlers a better understanding of the Aboriginal point of view and fought for recognition of Aboriginal rights is an important symbol for the *Nyoongah* and "deserves better recognition than a flayed hide preserved in some obscure museum" (Chesson 193).

The Actress lists some of the incidents that occurred as white settlement spread south.

ACTRESS. [. . .] In eighteen forty-one at Vasse, seven

Aborigines were shot by Mr. Bussell. In eighteen forty-two Bussell shot an Aboriginal caught stealing flour. The verdict was self-defense. In the same year he shot a seven-year-old-girl at point blank range. The verdict: accidental death. In eighteen forty-two Captain Molloy rounded up an entire tribe at Vasse and according to reports exterminated them and burnt their bodies. In eighteen twenty-nine the Aboriginal population of the South West was estimated at around thirteen thousand. By nineteen hundred and one there were less than eight hundred full-bloods left. (*Kullark* 1.9.38)

And at the end of Act one an Aboriginal actor sings:

ACTOR. [. . .]

Then you propped me up with Christ, red tape,
Tobacco, grog and fears,
Then disease and lordly rape
Through the brutish years. [. . .] (*Kullark* 1.9.39).

Through the Aborigines Protection Acts of the various states and officials called protectors, the Board for the Protection of Aborigines sought to control the everyday life of all Aboriginal peoples. With the sharp decline in the numbers of full-blooded Aboriginal population during the 1930s the original Aboriginal population was expected to die out, and the settlements created through this legislation were supposed to provide a “pillow for a dying race”. But a population explosion of part Aborigines at the same time, led to “the forced removal of mixed-blood children from their parents and camp life to be raised in orphanages, institutions and foster homes in White Australia” (21), and to the herding of Black Australians into reserves. As Shoemaker points out, “the 1929-1945 era saw both the summit of legal control and legislative repression of Aboriginal Australians and the first halting steps towards equality and citizenship [. . .]” (*Black Words* 34)

Act two scene one of *Kullark* takes stock of the situation in 1901. When “[. . .] after seventy-two years of European settlement the population of the colony of Western Australia [had] increased to one hundred and eighty thousand [. . .]”, the Aboriginal population had “reduced by half” and it was expected that “they will eventually die out” (*Kullark* 2.1.41). “[. . .] committees, inquiries, legislation, regulations, investigations and a new Government department, headed by a Chief Protector of Aborigines” was set up to deal with the “alarming” increase in the half-caste population (*Kullark* 2.1.41). A.O. Neville spells out his

policy of not allowing half-castes to grow up as vagrants and outcastes but to take them from its native mother and make them "into useful workmen and women" (*Kullark* 2.1.41). He would rather "be cruel in order to be kind" (*Kullark* 2.1.42) because according to him "a half-caste, who possesses few of the virtues and all of the vices of whites, grows up to be a mischievous and criminal subject" (*Kullark* 2.1.42).

BLACK ACTOR. [*speaking over the music*] The police would just arrive and take the child and put him on a reserve or a mission where he could learn to live white, to assimilate. While the children played in the Settlement compound -- huge were fences, concentration camp fence -- the old women would come up and call them over, hold their little hands through the compound fence and tell them who they were, who their mothers were, what their skin was, and what their totems and dreamings were. The children were caught, belted by the authorities, and told not to mix with those dirty blacks. (*Kullark* 2.1.42)

On reading "*Living Black: Blacks talk to Kevin Gilbert*", written by "a *Koori*, black fella from the Eastern States", Jamie in Act one scene eight reads out to his mother Rosie, some of the things Gloria Brennan, a Wongai girl had to say:

'My mother was used as a teacher on a settlement once too. She was taken away from my grandmother because she was

a half-caste. All half-castes, as they called them, were rounded up in Western Australia back in those days. And then they were put on a settlement down in the South-West that was right out of their area. Out of sight, out of mind".
(*Kullark* 1.8.34).

Rosie didn't need books to know about things like that. It had happened to Alec, Jamie's father. Jack Davis's parents too belonged to the stolen generation and in his life story he comments that, "nothing the missions gave could ever compensate for the loss of family continuity" (Chesson 122). In the epilogue to his autobiography *A Boy's Life*, Jack Davis describes how when Sally Morgan was researching for the life story of Jack McPhee's book *Wanamurraganya* strands of his own mother's origins began to come together. The memory of her being taken away had never left the minds of her tribal people and Jack McPhee was able to trace Davis's mother's family by the oral history network. Jack McPhee, who had been with him at Moore River turned out to be his uncle, and he was also able to supply Davis's skin name which is Burungu (Davis 145). Davis was never able to trace his father's Aboriginal family.

Life on the Reserve

The 1905 Act made it compulsory for Aborigines and part-Aborigines to live on reserves when required by the authority to do so (Chesson 127) and during the early 1920s town reserves became the focus of the Aboriginal way of life; the only alternative was incarceration

at Moore River Native Settlement (Haebich 222). Being in town meant living in unsatisfactory conditions under the watchful eye of the police and facing the resentment of the white townspeople. It also meant the distinct possibility of being sent to Moore River by zealous police officers or the department (Haebich 233). Ration depots were being deliberately closed down to force Aborigines to move to the settlements (166).

While in *Kullark*, the cast presents the Aboriginal situation during the Depression years of the 1930s, the first act of *No Sugar* depicts life in the Government Well Aboriginal Reserve at Northam in 1929. According to Anna Haebich,

the Aborigines at the Northam camp had a background of displacement and discriminatory treatment at the hand of whites. Many were originally from New Norcia; pushed off the mission early in the century, they camped in Moora until the early 1920s when, following a sustained and vicious campaign by the white town residents, they were forced out of the town and into the surrounding districts. Several families found regular employment in the Northam district until the Depression forced them to move into the Northam town camp which was typically situated one and a half miles from the town in a river bed opposite the sanitary depot and the rubbish dump" (Haebich 304).

They lived in humpies made of corrugated iron, flattened kerosene tins, old wheat bags and bush timber (Haebich 234).

Apart from a hundred Aborigines who were employed all the rest depended on Government rations which included one-and-a-half pounds of sugar, eight pounds of flour, four ounces of tea, one stick of tobacco per week, plus a daily issue of three quarters of a pound of meat (*Kullark* 2.3.46). In nineteen thirty the distribution of meat was discontinued (*Kullark* 2.3.46). Soap no longer being included as a ration item, Milly worries about keeping the kids clean and sending them to school (*No Sugar* 1.2.22), and Cissie wonders how she's going to wash her hair (*No Sugar* 1.3.26). According to Gran, Jam and Wattle seeds, which used to be available in abundance, were "more better than white man's flour", and there were "no weevils in jam and wattle seeds". However, as "*wetjalas* cut all the trees down" (*No Sugar* 1.2.22) they were no longer available. Sam, Joe and Jimmy contribute to the household. While Sam and Joe hunt rabbits with dowak and dogs to supplement meat for their dinner, Jimmy supplies stolen turnips for the rabbit stew (*No Sugar* 1.3.26). Sam earns some money by cutting fence posts for old skinny Martin, and a bundle of fox scalps fetches Jimmy a bounty of three pounds at the Shire Office (*No Sugar* 1.2.18). As all the money Milly has got would only suffice to buy the children an apple each for lunch, Joe supplements money so that they might have a pie (*No Sugar* 1.1.16).

The Depression is shown to have affected whites as well. Frank Brown, who once had his own farm on Lake Yealering lost it, between the rabbits a couple of bad seasons and the bank and “had been on the road already for six months” without work. He had been in Northam for about a fortnight, and was camped down near the saleyards with ten other white unemployed blokes (*No Sugar* 1.2.18). His “wife and two kids [were] staying with her parents in Leederville” and he couldn’t “even raise a train fare to Perth to go and see them” (*No Sugar* 1.2.18). The Millimurra family shares their meagre meals with him.

During winter, Cissie falls sick with pneumonia. The Millimurras try to keep out the cold by patching up the sides of their shelter with bags sewn together and by putting more tin salvaged from the dump for the roof (*No Sugar* 1.6.38). They have bread and fat for breakfast and the rabbit traps are empty.

Northam transfer

In *Kullark* the White actress comments:

WHITE ACTRESS. On January seventeenth, nineteen thirty-three, eighty-nine Aborigines, the entire population of the Northam camp, were rounded up by police and dumped in the Moore River Settlement. The Northam Shire Council said they had scabies and were a health risk. (2.3.46)

Black Actor adds that, “at Moore River it was found that only four of the eighty-one had the disease” (*Kullark* 2.3.46). In an author’s note in

Kullark, Davis explains that, “the experiences of Thomas Yorlah are [. . .] based on those of a number of Aborigines involved in the 1933 Northam transfer” (6). Both *Kullark* and *No Sugar* features this well documented incident.

No Sugar dramatizes the circumstances leading to their removal. The Lands Department refused to gazette the Guildford Road site in Northam, which had been proposed as a new reserve for the Aborigines, because it had met with objections from the adjoining landholders. A Mr. Smith, who according to Sergeant Carroll was “[. . .] generally down the Shamrock Hotel till stumps” (*No Sugar* 1.2.21) claimed that “[. . .] he wouldn’t be able to go out and leave his wife home alone at night” (*No Sugar* 1.2.21). Moreover, the Guildford Road site, with water supply and a couple of acres of grazing land was considered unsuitable for a native reserve and the Council planned to develop it as a “[. . .] recreation park, for boy scouts and picnic parties” (*No Sugar* 1.7.42). Though at first Sergeant Carroll of Northam is asked to recommend an alternative site for a new reserve for the Aborigines “[. . .] well away from any residences” (*No Sugar* 1.2.21) later it is decided to shift the Natives at Northam so that “the town and shire [. . .][would be] quite devoid of natives after the seventeenth” and the impending elections (*No Sugar* 1.9.47). Warrants are prepared to arrest and remove them to Moore River, which according to Neville was already bursting at the seams.

In the play *Kullark*, the character Thomas Yorlah, born at Narrogin, on the reserve and living at Northam, is arrested under Section Twelve of the Aborigines Act and along with his wife and two children is bundled on to a train to Moore River since the law states that “[. . .] any native under the Aborigines Act can be moved from any area to any other area” (*Kullark* 2.3.47). In spite of his protest that he doesn’t fall under the Act, that he was only a quarter native blood, that he doesn’t live on the reserve or obtain Government blankets or rations (*Kullark* 2.3.47), Yorlah is given an hour’s time to move out. They were permitted to take only the clothes they stood up in (*Kullark* 2.3.48), and could pick up the children, who were playing down at the well, on the way to the station (*Kullark* 2.3.47). Their “kangaroo dawgs” were not allowed (*Kullark* 2.3.48).

In *No Sugar*, the shifting of the natives is shown to have been planned with military precision and is kept strictly confidential. Neville instructs Carrol that they are to be shifted in a special AR coach and brake van on the seven-twenty a.m. train. At Midland, the coaches will be attached to a train that leaves immediately for Mogumber and from there they are expected to proceed on foot to a quarantine camp at Long Pool, just east of the settlement (*No Sugar* 1.9.47). He authorises an expenditure of one and sixpence per native for food and insists that they are not to be allowed to leave the train at any stage of the journey.

At the Government Well Aboriginal Reserve, under threat of being arrested, the natives are ordered to leave the next morning, taking only

their personal belongings. According to Sergeant Carroll "every native in Northam's goin'! (*No Sugar* 1.10.49) [. . .] for health reasons. Epidemic of skin disease" (*No Sugar* 1.10.50). Jimmy knows why they're being removed: " 'Coz *wetjalas* in this town don't want us 'ere, don't want our kids at the school, with their kids" (*No Sugar* 1.10.50). Moreover, Jimmy Mitchell, the premier of Western Australia, wants to win the elections and the Aborigines are no vote banks. However, according to Jimmy, Mitchell is not going to win " 'Coz he's got all them Chinamens workin' on his farm at Grass Valley and *wetjalas* don't like that. He's gunna get rida the blackfellas, he should get rid of them Chinamens too" (*No Sugar* 1.10.50). While Old Uncle Herbie and Jimmy who has a serious heart condition are taken by train, Sam and his family, and on her insistence, Gran, are allowed to go by road with the horse and cart. In spite of all the efforts, Premier [Mitchell] loses the Northam seat and the Government is routed in the elections (*No Sugar* 2.10.76) but the Aborigines are not allowed to return.

Moore River Settlement

Anna Haebich describes the Moore River Settlement as a "multipurpose 'total institution' used by the Department as a 'dumping ground' for Aborigines from various parts" of Western Australia (199). Staff quarters, dormitories for children and trainees and settlement facilities were located in a central area called the compound, the adults

lived in a cleared camping area within walking distance both being surrounded by farming land (Haebich 169).

At the Moore River Settlement Yorlah is supplied with Settlement, clothes and the kids are separated from the parents to sleep in the dormitory. The parents are allowed to see them two-and-a-half hours every day and all day Saturday and Sunday (*Kullark* 2.3.48). According to Neville, at Moore River, Yorlah's "wife and children are well cared for, [. . .] get three nourishing meals daily" and "everything is supplied there" for them. Yorlah's description of life at Moore River is different: "bread and fat for breakfast, kangaroo stew for lunch and bread and golden syrup for evening meal"; [. . .] "a bag humpy for my wife, a locked-up compound for my kids, sleeping in beds riddled with bugs and fleas, and a cat-o'-nine-tails for beltin' my eldest boy" (*Kullark* 2.3.50). According to him, "[. . .] Moore River is, a prison" (*Kullark* 2.3.50). While at Northam the kids always got a full belly and on Saturdays were treated to a packet of boiled lollies each and apples, when they went into town in the old horse and cart, shopping. At night they went to the pictures (*Kullark* 2.3.46), though they had to watch it from the roped off section for the Nyoongahs, "right up the back" (*Kullark* 2.3.47).

Yorlah is expected to start work at the Settlement digging ditches for three-and-six a week while he had been paid three pounds ten a week at his job in Northam (*Kullark* 2.3.51). His son, Little Alec had been "in seventh grade before they stopped the *Nyoohgah* kids goin' to school" at

Northam, while at the Moore river Settlement they had only up to grade six (*Kullark* 2.3.52). Mary his daughter also had been in trouble and “Them trackers held her down over a bag of flour and Mr. Neale flogged ‘er till the poor kid piddled herself. Then ‘e made ‘er eat the flour” (*Kullark* 2.3.52)

“If I’m quarter and she’s half, what does that make the bloody kids?” (*Kullark* 2.3.49) wonders Yorlah. After waiting outside the Aborigines Department for two days to see Mr. Neville, he grabs Neville’s arm as he enters to make him stop and asks Neville “for an exemption from the Aboriginal Act” in order to get out of the Settlement. But according to Neville, Yorlah had “about as much chance of getting an exemption as a camel has of [. . .] getting through the eye of a needle” (*Kullark* 2.3.51). Anna Haebich records that the racial background of many applicants for the exemption was so complex that Neville had to seek the advice of the Crown Law department and that the subsequent legal decisions often created strange anomalies (164). She documents how one man was informed that as a “quadroon” he was exempt from the Act, his wife, a “half-caste”, was not while their children being “octaroons” were, like their father, exempt from the Act (164).

Thomas Yorlah and his family escape from the Settlement with expert advice from Peter Jackson who had runaway lots of times with his kids, on how to beat the trackers by keeping away from the railway lines and the main roads and by sticking to the high ground (*Kullark* 2.3.53).

The sixty year old Peter Jackson had become a legend of his time by repeatedly escaping from Moore River in the 1920s so that he may bring his children up his own way, away from the influence of white society and according to the inspector of Aborigines, E.C. Mitchell, Jackson felt that he needed "some law to protect him from the chief Protector" (Haebich 255). The Yorlahs are caught and brought back by Bluey the black tracker and Thomas is given a six -month term in goal. But by then he had his kids looking healthier and their sore all healed. After four unsuccessful attempts and two years in goal, Mr. Neville gives Yorlah permission to take his wife and children from the Settlement. But Mr. Neale makes it very clear that they will not be allowed to return to Northam, "to apply for assistance from the Aborigines Department" and to appear in "any town after six in the evening" (Kullark 2.3.55).

In *No Sugar*, the Millimurra family from Northam is brought to the quarantine camp in Long Pool and is sheltered in a tent with a bush shade over it. As soon as they reach the camp Gran is concerned about *gnummarri* (tobacco), and *winjar* (water), Sam about the availability of tucker and *daitj* (meat) and Milly about a sheet of iron for the fireplace. The Matron, [the superintendent's Missus, who runs the hospital (*No Sugar* 2.1.55)], who examines them, declares that, "they 're a healthy lot" [and] a credit to Milly (*No Sugar* 2.3.60).

Superintendent Neale is furious to hear that after busting his guts to get the quarantine camp ready on time only four of the eighty nine

natives dumped on him under the pretext of the skin disease have actually got it (*No Sugar* 2.5.64). Dogs being identified as the only health hazard in the camp, he goes out to get them with horses, a length of rope, rifle and ammunition (*No Sugar* 2.5.64).

Superintendent Neal had been given his position because of his experience with the native people in South Africa during the Boer war, and he had a colonial mentality (Chesson 28). He ran the settlement like a colonial establishment and employed Aboriginal guards, like Billy Kimberley. Neal, who had the full force of the wider community behind him, was the representative of bureaucracy, authority, cruelty and oppression from the outside society (Chesson 32-33).

Mary Dargurru, a compound girl who's "from up North" (*No Sugar* 2.2.57) had spent three Christmases at the Settlement and hated everything in it especially Mr. Neal who scared her. According to Mary, "He's always hangin' around where the girls are workin'; in the cookhouse, in the sewin' room. And he's always carryin' that cat-o'-nine tails and he'll use it, too" (*No Sugar* 2.4.62). A letter from Mrs. Mary Warmadean, an Aboriginal woman living at the Moore River Settlement, submitted as evidence to the Mosley Royal Commission in 1934 states that: "Neal lays the girls over the flour Bags and use the cat nine tail on them while the trackers hold them for him [. . .]" (Chesson 31). Another statement submitted to the commission by Annie Morrison is given as a preface to Act two of *Kullark*: "[. . .] i hear some girls screaming in the

office and the trackers said two trackers held the Girls hand and feet over a sack of flour and Mr Neal gave them a hiding and till tha wet them self we had to eat the flour after" (*Kullark* 40). In *No Sugar*, Neal flogs Mary with the cat-o'-nine-tails as Billy holds her outstretched over a pile of flour bags (*No Sugar* 4.2.93).

Joe Millimurra notices that Mary is pretty and is glad they're not related as strict rules apply to marriage (*No Sugar* 2.2.57). Mary explains what happens to Aboriginal girls who go out to work for *guddeeah* (whitemen) on a farm:

MARY. [. . .] Some of them *guddeeahs* real bad. My friend went last Christmas and then she came back *bootjarri*. She reckons the boss's sons used to belt her up and, you know, force her. Then they kicked her out. And when she had that baby them trackers choked it dead and buried it in the pine plantation (*No Sugar* 2.4.62).

In *The Dreamers* Uncle Worru also says the same thing.

WORRU. Some of them trackers was real *warrah*, you know when them *yorgas* was sent to work for *wetjalas*. [*Miming a pregnant woman.*] And sometimes they would come back *bootjari*, and when them *koolongarahs* was born, them trackers, Billy Kimberley and Bluey too, [*miming chocking*] they would *woort beerny* them babies an' bury them in the pine plantation, night time. (1.6.30)

In his note to the Minister, Auber Octavius Neville, Chief Protector of Aborigines, had mentioned that “[. . .] of eighty girls from the Moore River Native Settlement who went out into domestic service [. . .]” (1.2.20), “Thirty returned to the Settlement in pregnant condition . . .” (*No Sugar* 1.2.-21).

At the Superintendent’s office in Moore River Native Settlement, Neal leers at Mary’s body when she brings him tea on a tray (*No Sugar* 2.5.63) and later asks her to work at the hospital. Mary is in tears at the prospect because “when Mr. Neal sends a girl to work at the hospital it usually means . . . that he wants that girl . . . for himself” (*No Sugar* 2.6.69) and if she didn’t comply she’d be sent back home to marry some old man. The fact that he would never give her permission to marry Joe forces them to run away to Northam. “ I’m gunna show you my country. Got a big river, swans, beautiful white swans” (*No Sugar* 2.7.70) The Millumurra family helps them to get away. Milly gives Mary some damper, Sam gives Joe a blanket and Jimmy advices them to “jump the rattler” and “keep to the gravel country” in order to avoid the trackers (*No Sugar* 2.7.71). Milly warns them not to wake the kids since the “less they know the better” (*No Sugar* 2.7.71).

On his return to the Government Well Aboriginal Reserve at Northam with Mary, Joe finds that, their camp had been destroyed by the police. He shows Mary the spot where their camp used to be, the rocks on which he and Cissie used to slide down on pieces of tin when

they were little, and the gum tree on which the magpies used to nest. Sergeant Carrol forbids them from camping at the Government Well Aboriginal Reserve (*No Sugar* 3.2.81), so with Sam's rabbit trap, and the burnt remains of David's bike (*No Sugar* 3.1.79) salvaged from the rubble they go on to live independently in Northam, which was no longer a ration depot, for two months, by working at Lockyer's, when Neville once again interferes in their life.

Since the Town council and especially the councilors George Withnall and Ray Drew were adamant that no natives remain in the Northam area, Neville instructs Carrol to apprehend them. Moreover "some mob of do-gooder women were kicking up about them being shifted out before the election" (*No Sugar* 3.3.83). With the Royal Commission on natives making enquiries the council did not want any trouble. The girl was to be sent back to the Settlement while Joe was to be sentenced for six months imprisonment for absconding with Mary Dargurru, a minor. Back at Moore River, Mary refuses to stay in the Nurses' quarters and work in the hospital as suggested by Neal but insists on living with Joe's Mum and Dad. Furious, Neal flogs her with the cat-o'-nine-tails as Billy holds her outstretched over a pile of flour bags (*No Sugar* 4.2.93). On getting out of gaol Joe gets Neville's permission to leave the settlement with Mary and his baby on condition that they don't return to Northam. Jack Davis in his foreword to Anna Haebich's book *For Their Own Good* says: "I lived through these times: I

have experienced the oppression of the Aborigines Act, the misery of the fringe camps and the horrors of Moore River native settlement” (xiii), and hence gives a true portrait of the times through his plays.

World War II

Contravening published regulations Aborigines were used by the Army and also fought in the AIF, in North Africa and New Guinea during World War II and it provided “the spark for increased black Australian urbanization, activism and self-determination” (Shoemaker, *Black Words* 63). Aboriginal contribution to war is given in a metatheatrical piece in Act two scene five in *Kullark*. Over four hundred Aborigines served in the Army, fifty served overseas, two died in Japanese prisoner of war camps. Young Alec Yorlah, demobilised back to civilian life and to a job in the Forestry Department, is warned by his colonel about the psychological warfare outside:

COLONEL. [. . .] it'll be a lot harder for you coloured boys. [. . .]

[. . .]

COLONEL. [. . .] You'll always have to try harder, do better,
prove yourself more than a white man.

[. . .]

COLONEL. [. . .] morally and mentally we're still a racist
nation at heart. People will always treat you differently and
find some excuse to justify their actions (*Kullark* 2.5.59)

Young Alec Yorlah is given a citizenship certificate, called "dawg collars" (*Kullark* 2.5.59) by the Aboriginals. "Classified white by the Commissioner of Native Welfare" (*Kullark* 2.5.60) he is "exempt from the Natives Administration Act" (*Kullark* 2.5.59) and is expected to "think white an' act white" (*Kullark* 2.5.59). But Alec believed that, as a forward scout for his platoon in New Guinea, it was thinking black that helped him survive. "Somehow I always knew when they [Japs] were goin' to open up, always had time to yell to me mates behind me" (*Kullark* 2.5.59). Now that Alec has got the citizenship rights, the local policeman warns him that he would have to live up to the privilege which means that he "[. . .] Can't have no 'lations visitin', can't live on the reserve. Citizenship don't sound much like freedom to [. . .]" him (*Kullark* 2.5.63). Jack Davis observes that since Aborigines holding the citizenship rights were forced to dissociate themselves from the wider community many possible leaders were lost to the Aboriginal community (Chesson 118).

David Millimurra in *In Our Town* also exclaims: "the law by some miraculous metaphysical process has changed me into a whiteman" (1.3.8). According to David Millimurra, who had recently returned from war, and is "[. . .] the most decorated serviceman in [. . .] town" (*In Our Town* 1.12.30), "Whenever I faced the Japs I never thought of country. All I thought of was survival" (*In Our Town* 1.8.21) and he was accurate in throwing a hand grenade because he "was scared some quick nip bastard would be better at throwing them back at me" (*In Our Town* 1.10.25).

According to him, War “brings out the worst and the best in men” (*In Our Town* 1.15.33).

In *Kullark*, Alec notices that things hadn’t changed much in the reserve and he doesn’t expect the town to have changed much either. But he plans to move off the Reserve to a house just out of town, is determined not to become like the *wetjalas* he used to see as a young boy, “clingin’ to the bar like half dead flies” (2.5.62), hopes to marry Rosie Betts, a *Yamatji* from Carnarvon, who used to be a compound kid like himself at Moore River Settlement, and had later moved on to Perth and when his kids grow up wanted to see to it that they get a good education. “I want ‘em to grow up to be teachers or nurses, something with a bit of dignity [because] They’ve been servants and farmers far too long” (*Kullark* 2.5.64). But his father warns him that “*Wetjalas* still the same in this town, still don’t like *Nyoongahs*” (*Kullark* 1.5.60).

Set in Northam, Western Australia, in 1946, the play *In Our Town* continues the story of the Millimurra family of *No Sugar*, now, a decade later, living on the outskirts of a country town. Most of his life David Millimurra had been living “on the patch of gravel a couple of hundred yards from the local rubbish tip” (*In Our Town* 1.3.6). But now that he has got his citizenship rights he plans to shift to “the old Beaumont place out on the cemetery road” with his “mum, dad, Joe and his family and old Uncle Herbie Mirralga” (*In Our Town* 1.3.6). According to David, his mother has “never switched an electric light on in her life, let alone

cooked with an electric stove!" (*In Our Town* 1.8.20). Milly, looks forward to their move from their camp on the reserve to a house in town and dreams of ". . . a place of our own, roof over our heads, rooms for the kids, lovely rose garden . . . [and plans to] put some veggies in . . . some chooks" and is sure she wouldn't miss the rain pouring in through the hole in the roof, "Having to shift the kids out of the drips. The heat in summer, the doublegees and flies and stink from the tip" (*In Our Town* 2.4.42). But Sam warns her not to count out chickens before they are hatched (*In Our Town* 2.4.42).

Milly hopes that it would be their last move and insists on taking everything with her: "It's taken me years to gather what I got and I'm not leaving anything behind" (*In Our Town* 1.5.9). She remembers their earlier moves to the settlement and back again. Of how her old mum had "fought with that old Sergeant to take her dog, Wow Wow, with her" and how she laughed when they could come back to Northam "to her own country to die" (*In Our Town* 1.5.11). The family remembers their days at Moore River, of how Sam had made his water carting yoke "the day little Jimmy was born in Moore River, [. . .] eight years ago" (*In Our Town* 1.5.9) and how Joe had run away from the settlement with Mary and got locked up in Northam by a young cop.

JOE. [. . .] I remember telling him that the only reason he was in the police force was because he wouldn't have to join the army.

DAVID. Well he didn't make it. He was taken prisoner and died in Tobruk. (*In Our Town* 1.5.10).

Joe adds that Moore River was now a "training place for aboriginal missionaries" (*In Our Town* 1.5.10). Jack Davis had dramatized most of these reminiscences in his play *No Sugar*.

Though David assures his family that "this move is permanent" (12), Sam warns him that it is only "if the whiteman will let us" (*In Our Town* 1.5.12). According to Uncle Herbie "the wetjala's like, a dugaitj. You gotta watch 'em all the time. Don't take your eye off 'em" (*In Our Town* 1.5.12). Milly decides to keep her fingers crossed and asks Sam not to throw away the water-carrying yoke yet (*In Our Town* 1.5.13).

The publican considers David a "bit ambitious" in looking for a house in town since in his opinion "nigs don't usually buy houses" (*In Our Town* 2.6.44). According to him they would be better off in a camp. At the bowling green, the town talks about Alec Beaumont selling his house to Miller and the general opinion is that "property values will go down if they start selling houses to boongs [. . .]" (*In Our Town* 2.6.45). Soon the coach drops David from the next week's game (*In Our Town* 2.9.50), Jim Moss refuses to sell the truck to David and by buying off the Beaumont property, which had been promised to David denies him the one chance to get his family and Uncle Herbie out of the cold.

In all his plays Davis presents without apology and with deep sympathy the pressure of alcohol on many Aboriginal families. He

portrays how the disalignment of cultural values have led to an uneasy existence in a “twilight world of welfare dependency and petty criminality” (Gillam 131). The contemporary Aboriginal situation is depicted in *Kullark* through the characters Alec and Rosie Yorlah and the opening scene gives a glimpse of the Yorlah household of 1979. A radio is blaring out the local commercial station. Rosie clears up the bottles of the night before. Alec clearly suffering from a hangover flips through the newspaper to the racing page. Alec is an alcoholic, is dependent on the Social Service, is prejudiced against white “do gooders” and is impatient of Jamie and his Aboriginal activism, while Rosie struggles to keep the family going.

According to Jamie the trouble with Pop and his generation is they got no guts. If a Wetjala said “jump”, they all jumped (*Kullark* 1.8.34) while Alec feels that “All these young fellas today, just ‘cause they’re getting’ an education they think they’re ‘igh an’ mighty” (*Kullark* 1.4.16). Rosie defends [*Kullark* 1.8.34,1.8.35) the alcoholic and irresponsible Alec with whom she had been “shacked up” for twenty five years, as she is aware what he had to go through; and believes that “ole boy’s pretty level ‘eaded when ‘e wants to be” (*Kullark* 2.2.45).

The irresponsibility, defeatism and alcoholism of the men in the family are also depicted in *The Dreamers*. “As a race of people we have one of the highest mortality rates in the world, due to alcohol and alcoholic diseases. In Western Australia alone, one in twenty eight dies

through alcoholism, before the age of forty-five". In *The Dreamers*, the hopeless attitudes of Roy and Eli and Dolly's endless fight to make ends meet is the inevitable result of this situation. (Davis, *Meanjin* 45). Jamie in *Kullark* gets involved in a fight with the publican, is arrested and has to be bailed out for fifty dollars by his parents, Alec and Rosie Yorlah (*Kullark* 2.2.44). In *Barungin* most of the male members of the Wallitch family of 1988 are in and out of jail.

Both Meena in *Barungin* and Dolly in *The Dreamers* are concerned about their teenage sons, Peter and Micky ending up in goal. When Peter is found riding in a stolen car and is arrested by the police Dolly declares: "No son of mine is goin' to gaol if I can help it" (*The Dreamers* 1.7.42) and gets him out. But years later, as Granny Doll in *Barungin*, she has to mourn the death of her son Peter who dies in custody. And this happens because he tries to protect his nephew, Micky, whose stolen goods are found in the car Peter was driving. Peegun who accidentally catches Mickey redhanded had stashed it away for him.

Jack Davis observes that superhuman efforts were required on the part of the women to keep a house under reserve conditions and to hold the family together (Chesson 128). In the tribal family presented in *Kullark*, the women and children are shown to be following the men with bags kulumans and firesticks (*Kullark* 1.1.7), but in an urban situation as shown later, it is the women who lead carrying an assortment of boxes and bundles (*Kullark* 2.1.47).

In *The Dreamers* Dolly complains about the living conditions: "Oh, gawd, I wish we 'ad a decent place to live in. No hot water, no locks on the doors, worse than livin; in a bloody camp" (10), and the children fight for soap and water. All the women characters are found struggling to survive in deplorable living conditions; fighting against alcoholism in their family, but determined to see that their children have a better future. Rosie Yorlah of the contemporary family depicted in *Kullark*, is determined that her son Alec should complete his course in a Teachers' Training College and go on to be a school teacher (2.1.44) She wants to "[. . .] prove to every single Wetjala in town that [her] son is as good as theirs, even better" (*Kullark* 2.2.44), while Dolly in *The Dreamers* wants Meena and Shane to finish school, and Meena to stay on in school with an Aboriginal study grant and land a decent office job, or to become a nurse (2.1.55). She is concerned about Meena keeping late nights as she has seen "young girls walkin' around with babies on their hips" and doesn't want that to happen to her daughter (*The Dreamers* 2.1.55).

Dolly remembers how she, like other young girls, used to get a piece of cotton from the sleeves of her dress and tie notes on the legs of beetles and throw them up in the air, hoping that some boy would find them and read the notes (*The Dreamers* 1.6.34). She now wonders whether to be thankful for that beetle or not for finding Roy.

Though powerless to effect any changes Gran in *No Sugar* protests spiritedly when the rations are cut and walks off with Milly hooting and

laughing *Nyoongah* fashion. She refuses to comply easily with the order to shift to Moore River, insists on going with the road party along with Sam and Milly and on taking the dogs as well. By wailing, crying, tearing her hair and throwing plates and mugs about she forces Sergeant Carrol to give in (*No Sugar* 1.10). As Jimmy and Sam start a drunken brawl, at their dwelling in the Reserve Gran charges at them, grabbing both by the hair pulling viciously (*No Sugar* 1.3.30). Later she takes her wahna stick and gives them both a solid poke in the ribs forcing them to get up though reluctantly (*No Sugar* 1.3.30). Proud of her heritage and skills, she shows off Joe's neat belly button and announces "I brought him into the world with me own two hands" (*No Sugar* 2.3.60), "I brought plenty *kooloongah* into this world, Matron" (*No Sugar* 2.3.60), Matron admires and acknowledges Gran's midwifery skills. At the Long Pool Camp, Gran fetches some medicinal leaves for the huge welts on Mary's back, made by Neale's cat o nine tails. "put these *Jeerung mear* on your back. Fix up quick and make you better" (*No Sugar* 4.3.93). As Mary refuses to go to a hospital but insists on having her baby in the camp, Gran assures her of her assistance. "I brought Joe into this world and, by crikey, I'll bring his baby" (*No Sugar* 4.3.93).

History is also presented through the memories and stories of the old Aboriginal characters in the plays. The Old fella whose death is mourned by the contemporary *Nyoongah* family in *Kullark*, was well over a hundred (*Kullark* 1.1.10) at his death. Alec Yorlah, remembers how

when they were kids at Moore River the old man used to speak about being "brought up shepherding sheep before any fences was put up" (*Kullark* 1.1.10). It is an often forgotten fact that Aborigines were the mainstay of the cattle industry. He also used to go sandalwood cutting out in the eastern goldfields (*Kullark* 1.4.16). This old man who was "always tellin' yarns about them old Nyoonghs" (*Kullark* 1.1.10) reminds one of old Worru, the great "Universal man" in *The Dreamers*. Dolly remembers him as a young man, "straight as wattle spears" (2.7.79), fast and sure in a hunt, the custodian of Nyoongah stories, songs, dances and language (2.7.79). She also remembers how as a young man working on Minily: "[. . .] the overseer and the boss tied Worru up and they beat him and belted him with a bleedin' stock whip. They left him there tied up in the sun. Anyway he got loose and night time they was *tjurip* sleepin', he snuck up on 'em and he belted them two Wetjalas somethin' cruel" (*The Dreamers* 2.2.67).

In the opening scene of *The Dreamers*, Worru, the elder of the family and the only one who can remember what life was like in the bush, is revealed alone downstage going down memory lane "to where the camp place used to be" (1.1.7). Pleasant memories, -- of "voices, laughing, singing," of Billy Kimberley corroborreeing for a tin of Lucky Hit, and then sharing it with his friends, of Angie, who was proud of her church wedding to Herbie, of meal times when Bella pulled "the damper like a golden moon / from the ashes of the fire", of sharing "the last of

the bacca", (1.1.8) -- come surging back to his mind. The camp situated on the Swan, the old homestead near by and the kindly old man Hammersley are all gone. And as Worru puts it in the refrain:

WORRO. Now we who were there
who were young,
are now old and live in suburbia,
and my longing is an echo
a re-occurring dream,
coming back along the track
from where the campfires used to gleam.

(*The Dreamers* 1.1.8)

Here Jack Davis addresses the problem of reconciling the old "way of life tied to being a part of the land, whilst living in suburbia" and of surviving with an Aboriginal sense of identity (Saunders viii). It may be noticed that even in Worru's farthest memories the colonial presence is very much there. The setting for this poem is "on the banks of the Swan River at historic Guildford, on Hamersley's farm", which was established on Nyoongah tribal ground and Davis remembers that from the early days of white settlement, he and his descendants had allowed the original people to camp there unmolested (*Meanjin* 43).

The old man Worru is a conglomerate of three old men Davis knew as a boy of fourteen years in Moore River Native Settlement (*Meanjin* 43). Davis describes Skipper, one of the inspirations for the composite

character Worru, as “blind through trachoma, hunched and alone in a world of his own [. . .] It was as if he could see a vision of the past in [his campfire] [. . .] when his disposition changed he would begin to recall the past, as if it dwelt there, alive in the flames” (Chesson 36). Winarn, another old fellow from the north, and the second of the trio who inspired Worru, lived an active life and had done just about everything it was possible for an outback man to do. A master storyteller, he was able to hold an audience until the embers of the campfire had faded into ash (Chesson 37). Jack Henry, an old man of such an antiquity that it would have been impossible to guess his age, recalled a time when Aborigines had not been affected by European intrusion, saw that period as a golden age, and regretted its passing (Chesson 37). Jack Davis who shared his feeling of nostalgia hopes that in Worru, Henry will continue to live on (Chesson 38). Jack Davis himself played the part of Worru in the stage production (Johnson, *John Pat* xii).

Both Granny Doll in *Barungin* and Gran in *No Sugar* are preoccupied with the survival of their family and “fiercely holds the family together, instructing them in the ways of their people” (Carmody 56). Like Worru, towards the end of the play, a tired Gran, uses her own language more frequently and lives more often in the past.

Under the 1916 regulation to the 1905 Act a small number of Aboriginal men were appointed as “trackers” or “police” to assist in

maintaining discipline. Recruited from among the inmates at the settlement, they had a higher status, power over other inmates and material benefits. Both 'traitors' and 'victims' they were not accepted as equals by the staff and were openly ostracized and shunned by their fellow inmates (Haebich 205). At the Moore River Native Settlement in the play *No Sugar*, Billy Kimberly, identifies himself as, "a politjman" (*No Sugar* 2.1.55). But Cissie exclaims that "he's black" (*No Sugar* 2.1.55) and to David he "ain't black, [but] purple" (*No Sugar* 2.1.55). To Sam, Billy who smokes a clay pipe and carries a whip, is "more like Tom Mix" (*No Sugar* 2.1.55), the American film star of the twenties who played cowboy roles (Carmody 35). To Gran, he "ain't politjman", [but] "just [a] black tracker" (*No Sugar* 2.1.55) but she fears that he might be a *boolyaduk* (magic man). To Joe "he's *yuart* (nothing) (*No Sugar* 2.1.55). The children laugh at him and Joe, David and Cissie call him "*wahrdung, wahrdung, black crow*" (*No Sugar* 2.3.61). Neal calls him "blithering stone-age idiot", and "a bloody incompetent savage" (*No Sugar* 2.10.76). In *Kullark*, for capturing the runaway Yorlah family, Bluey, the black tracker, is rewarded with a "couple of extra sticks of tobacco" (*Kullark* 2.3.53).

Billy Kimberley is Other to both the whites and the Nyoongahs. In the White colonizing discourse, he is an agent of its oppression of the blacks. He acts his part as the policeman, when in *No Sugar* he pursues

Mary and Joe who had runaway and whips David who was going swimming instead of attending the Sunday class. But at the corroboree he reveals himself as a man without a people or a place, a family or a home. And by offering his whip to Joe, Billy fashions a new identity and a position for himself within the constraints of colonization (Dibble 96).

As Gilbert and Tompkins point out, characters in the plays of Jack Davis, are figured as “the remnants of a pre-contact history, the forces of the more official colonial record, and the contingencies of the current situation” (109), who are further fragmented through “the spatial and temporal limits to personal action, as well as political and intellectual discourses” (109). As part of the project of a recuperation of subjectivity, they have their own stories to tell.

WORKS CITED

- Armitage, Andrew. *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada and New Zealand*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995.
- Arthur, Kateryna. "Fiction and the Rewriting of History: A Reading of Colin Johnson." *Westerly* 1Mar. (1985) : 55-60.
- Carmody, Peter. Brodies' notes on Jack Davis's *No Sugar*. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994.
- Chesson, Keith. *Jack Davis: A Life Story*. Melbourne: Dent, 1988.
- Davis, Jack. "Aboriginal Australia." *Jagardoo: Poems from Aboriginal Australia*. Sydney: Methuen, 1977. 13.
- . *Barungin (Smell the Wind)*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1989.
- . *A Boy's Life*. Broome: Magabala Books, 1991.
- . "The Dreamers." *Meanjin*. 43.1 (1984): 45-48.
- . *The Dreamers. 1982*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1996.
- . *In Our Town*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1992.
- . *Kullark/The Dreamers*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1982.
- . *No Sugar*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1986.
- Dibble, Brian and Margaret MacIntyre. "Hybridity in Jack Davis's *No Sugar*." *Westerly*. 37.4 (1992): 93-98.
- Elder, Arlene A. "Self, Other and Post-Historical Identity in Three Plays by Jack Davis." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 25 (1990): 204-15.

- Gilbert, Helen and Joanne Tompkins. *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Gilbert, Helen. "'Talking Country': Place and Displacement in Jack Davis's Theatre." *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994. 60-71.
- Haebich, Anna. *For Their Own Good*. Perth: University of Western Australia, 1985.
- Johnson, Colin. Foreword. *John Pat and Other Poems*. By Jack Davis. Ferntree Gully: Dent, 1988.
- Robinson, Fergus and Barry York. *The Black Resistance: An Introduction to the History of the Aborigine's Struggle Against British Colonialism*. Camberwell: Wedescope Internations Publications, 1977
- Shoemaker, Adam. *Black Words, White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989.

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

Chapter IV

Interrogating Colonial Assumptions

in pain or in splendour

we will never surrender

the claim to Our Land

(Davis, "Our Land" 79)

They passed their laws

then drew a veil of death across

the children of the sun

(Davis, "The Land at the Brewery" 22)

[. . .] we led them out of barbarism

into the era of Christendom by baptizing

bibling blanketing and clothing them.

(Davis, "A Letter to the Shade of Charles Darwin" 29)

Views of Australia and the Aborigines framed in Europe before settlement drew on the works of classical authors like Herodotus, Caesar, Thucydides, Tacitus and Diodorus and their half-mythical accounts of Scythians, Helvetians and many other people on the fringes of the ancient world; on the Old Testament and on actual reports about North America or the Pacific (Reynolds, *Law of the Land* 28). After settlement attitude towards the Aborigines changed from feelings of ethnocentrism to hard line racism and accordingly, the policies adopted

towards them also changed. While ethnocentrism of the early period arose out of feelings of cultural superiority, later racism gave rise to feelings of superiority based on physical and racial differences; led to attempts to dominate and exploit the other through invasion, economic control or slavery, and was "illogical, scientifically invalid and unethical" (Broome 88). It was based on ignorance, on lack of sympathy, on fanciful racial theories and on the need to rationalize the dispossession of the Aborigines' land and the accompanying exploitation and violence (Broome 93). While the Aborigines were denigrated as 'savages', the Europeans were glorified as pioneers and celebrated as such in Australian literature. Broome points out that "the Europeans were not pioneers, because the Aborigines preceded them by 50,000 years" (91).

Land as Motif

Aboriginal people regarded land as a spiritual phenomenon. The landscape, considered to be formed through the activities of the Spirit beings, the creative ancestors of the Dreaming, was believed to retain their essence and the clans and groups held in sacred trust the chains of Dreaming sites. Each tribal group moved in a specific area, safeguarding and tending the land, which supported their traditional hunter-gatherer economy. They considered land to be the giver of life, their ceremonies ensured the annual cycle of life and they believed that on dying their spirits returned to the land.

Henry Reynolds in *The Law of the Land* makes the following

observations about Aboriginal occupation of land:

The Aborigines lived in relatively small districts with fixed, known and recognized boundaries. Although the food quest took them in many directions they had 'fixed residences'. They defended their territories against trespassers. Movement across boundaries necessitated diplomatic niceties. They 'enjoyed' their land, exploiting a wide range of food sources. They identified with their districts and took their name from it (59-60).

Aboriginal oral literature encoded in it, a wide range of rights and obligations towards the land and the aesthetic statements it gave rise to "were essentially political and juridical rather than personal and expressive" (Hodge and Mishra 92). Traditionally land was not an explicit theme in visual or verbal art.

When the British arrived in the 1770's, about a million Aborigines inhabited the continent and territories clearly defined by language, geography, beliefs and descent, divided the land into hundreds of identifiable nations (Bourke, *Aboriginal Australia* 35). However, in 1770 Captain James Cook claimed the Eastern coast of Australia for the British crown, on the concept of *terra nullius*, i.e. as territory belonging to no-one or over which no-one claims ownership. And "on the foundation of New South Wales [. . .] and South Australia, every square inch of territory in the colony became the property of the crown" (qtd. in

Reynolds *Law of the Land* 7). The British legal system recognised ownership of land as shown by the fencing of land to mark boundaries, the building of permanent structures and the farming of the land and failed to comprehend sophisticated systems of Aboriginal land usage and tenure. Hence, European ignorance, and their philosophical and political ideas, discredited Aboriginal occupation and possession (Reynolds, *Law of the Land* 22).

The British Common Law introduced in 1788, -superseded... customary law, handed down from the Dreaming to each Aboriginal group and followed by them for generations, and took away the sovereignty of the Aboriginal people -- the right to care for their own country and govern their own affairs. While the indigenous inhabitants of New Zealand, United States, Canada and South Africa have been acknowledged as the original owners of the soil, the rights of the Australian Aborigines, who had lived on their land for 40,000 years, for 1600 generations or more, have not been recognised. Explorer Edward John Eyre wrote in his journal:

Without laying claim to this country by right of conquest, without pleading even the mockery of cession, or the cheaterly of sale, we have unhesitatingly entered upon, occupied, and disposed of its lands, spreading forth a new population over its surface, and driving before us the original inhabitants. (Stone 66)

This fact of dispossession was the crux of the future race- relations problems in Australia.

In Jack Davis's play, *Kullark*, Yagan dancing out the creation of his homeland and naming his territory and Moyrahn marking the ground in front of Captain Stirling points to their claim over the land, which sustained their life and was part of their religion and culture since time immemorial. Billy Kimberley in *No Sugar* insists: "This still your country. [*Flinging his arms wide*]. You, you, you, you listen! *Gudeeah* make 'em fences, windmill, make 'em road for motor car, big house, cut 'em down trees. Still your country! (2.6.66-67). As Joe decides to run away with Mary from the Settlement to Northam, he promises to show her his "country" which has a big river and beautiful white swans (*No Sugar* 2.6.70) and later when he is permitted to leave, on condition that he would not return to Northam, Billy Kimberley insists: "That your country. You back sit down that place" (*No Sugar* 4.9.108). In *In Our Town*, Uncle Herbie insists that the place where he had set his yonga snares might be Mr. Crawford's land, "but it's still my country" (*In Our Town* 1.7.16) and Joe is glad that Gran could come back to her own country to die (*In Our Town* 1.5.11). Uncle Herbie in *In Our Town* claims that he [has] "been living out the lakes for [*He counts on his fingers.*] fifty years and [hence] that's my country -- see that's the law -- blackfellas law you know"; but as Joe reminds him "it's wayjella law now. Ours is finished" (*In Our Town*

2.5.43). Jamie of the contemporary family depicted in *Kullark* is shown to be a landrights activist continuing Aboriginal resistance.

While in *Kullark* Stirling's authorization of Aboriginal land to William, the settler raises the issue of land ownership, the massacre of the Aborigines at Pinjarra is also shown to be based on the issue of land. The Oombulgarri massacre of 1926, described by Billy Kimberley in *No Sugar* (2.6.67), and the shifting of the entire Aboriginal population of the Northam camp to Moore River Native Steeement in 1933, dramatized in both *Kullark* and *No Sugar* shows other forms of territorial invasion and dispossession.

Davis critiques the British system of justice. According to Yagan native wildlife including sheep belonged to everyone. The white man who killed kangaroo, duck, swan and mullet; accused, imprisoned and even killed Aborigines when they speared grazing sheep. Yagan's puzzled response to the settler Will's argument that "the sheep belong to the whiteman" only "But all those [other] things belong to everyone," is that "Archh, wetjala kartwarrah" (" . . . the white man is mad") (*Kullark* 1.7.28). Gilbert points out that this incident highlights the differences between settler and Aboriginal approaches to landscape and points to the inconsistency, or even hypocrisy, of white notions of ownership (65).

Yagan found that the same British law that appropriated their land, and made them intruders on their own traditional grounds enabled them to be shot with impunity (Chesson 192). Whites shot Blacks on

sight, rode them down with their horses, poisoned their waterholes and massacred them.

YAGAN. If *Nyoongah* steal from *Nyoongah*, *Nyoongah* peer
[indicating his leg] *nitjal*. Not kill. *Wetjala boorl boorl*.
[indicating his chest] here, and [his head] here. *Wetjala
warramut*" (*Kullark* 1.7.28).

Yagan is destroyed for upholding Aboriginal law and its principle of a life for a life, which justifies his killings of the settlers Entwistle, Jenkins, and the Velvick brothers in Fremantle. But Captain Stirling's massacre at Pinjarra is also shown to be based on that same 'barbaric' principle. To make their appropriation of Aboriginal land more secure and less hazardous and to ensure that there would be no more resistance to settlement, a tribe of sixty to seventy natives are surrounded and shot with the help of soldiers, policemen and settlers like Peel. In his warning to an Aboriginal woman Stirling justifies his actions with "The white man will not tolerate murder" (*Kullark* 1.9.38). To this day the region is known as the Peel region of Western Australia.

For the Aborigines today the issue of issues is land rights (Hodge and Mishra 92). In his 1991 National Report Commissioner Elliot Johnson pointed out that the socio-economic problems faced by many Aborigines were linked to the limited access to land and failure to protect sacred sites (Bourke and Cox 56). In 1982 the Mabo case forced the courts to review the doctrine of *terra nullius*, which had been found

binding on the Australian courts for long precluding any acknowledgement of native title. In the light of the established facts the Australian High court decision in June 1992 stated that, "at the time of occupation, Australia was NOT terra nullius" (qtd. in Bourke and Cox 58). Though the decision set the record straight, the courts have consistently refused to entertain any concept of Aboriginal sovereignty as it is against their powers to question the legitimacy of Australian sovereignty (Bourke and Cox 61). But in the words of Yami Lester, Aboriginal elder and Chairman of the Anangu Pitjantjara in 1988, "Until a real settlement is worked out, until a real treaty is agreed, we will continue to be surrounded by invaders, and you can't really call this land your home" (qtd. in Hodge and Mishra 24).

By the 1840s Aborigines could be arrested and held without trial, were unable to testify in court and were not permitted to buy alcohol or to carry a gun (Broome 91). Aborigines placed under the Act could be moved to a reserve and kept there against their will with no right of appeal (Broome 98).

According to Colin Tatz, law in Australia has perpetrated the Aborigines as a special, inferior legal class, has ascribed for generations, immutable negative traits, has branded as criminal (for the Aborigines) behaviour which is acceptable in society at large, has controlled Aborigines physically, mentally and geographically, has predicated the negative black image in white eyes and had fashioned official stereotypes.

Law has been manipulated to their disadvantage, excluded or allowed to be excluded, Aborigines from its benefits, and had created institutional subordination (*Race Politics in Australia* 49). Tatz goes on to point out that several policies, -- like segregation, protection-segregation, so-called assimilation, the wardship and welfare philosophy, so-called integration, -- proclaimed to protect Aborigines from white depredations became discriminations (50); that on reserves their cultural customs were prohibited, their mail, reading matter, recreation, marital and sexual relationships censored, their movements monitored their labour and wage worth diminished (Tatz 50). Law created 'offences' which only blacks could commit: drinking, leaving a reserve, entering one when barred, inter-marrying, refusing to work, being cheeky, writing salacious letters to a boy/girl-friend, committing adultery, playing cards; ascribed negative characteristics: 'grog' susceptibility, sexual promiscuity, cultural savagery, labour non-productivity and -- by white definition -- an unconcern for money; defined octoroons, quadroons, half-castes, full-bloods based on 'blood-content' and determined the degree and extent of rights (Tatz 50-51). These laws were applied to all Aborigines unless they had an exemption certificate. "Australia has no legal culture, no historical ethos of giving Aborigines anything. With the exception of a handful of recent statutes, all laws have taken away from them, diminished them" (Tatz 53). Davis believed that: "once the truth is revealed forcefully enough, the bureaucrats, representatives of white

society, will no longer be able to deny us our birthright in a place which is still ours, regardless of politics and white notions of ownership” (*Meanjin* 47).

Instances of racial discrimination abound in Davis’s plays. In *No Sugar* Jimmy informs Frank that they [the Aborigines] are not allowed to walk down the street after sundown, not allowed in town, not allowed to go down the soak (*No Sugar* 1.3.28) that the police “can shoot our dawgs, anytime they want to” (*No Sugar* 1.3.29) and that, “it is an offence to supply liquor to an Aboriginal native under the Aboriginal Act”. If caught it would result in “three months hard labour” (*No Sugar* 1.2.18). In *Kullark*, Thomas Yorlah mentions “special place for Nyoongahs”, in 1933, at the pictures “sort of roped off, right up the back” (*Kullark* 2.3.47), so does Jimmy in *No Sugar*. “Wetjelas funny fellas all right [. . .]” (2.3.47) agrees Thomas Yorlah. Cissie in *No Sugar* complains that, “Old Tony the ding always sells us little shrivelled [apples] and them wetjala kids big fat ones” (*No Sugar* 1.2.16).

Milly complains that “cockies want ‘em [Aboriginal men] to work for nothin’” (*No Sugar* 1.2.22) and that her son Joe who cut a hundred posts was given “a pair of second hand boots and a piece of stag ram so tough even the dawgs couldn’t eat it” (*No Sugar* 1.2.23). “They not slaves, Chergeant” (*No Sugar* 1.2.23) insists Gran. In 1945 while Thomas Yorlah clears four hundred acres of land for a quid an acre, Wetjelas who did

the other four hundred get thirty bob an acre for the same sort of country (*Kullark* 2.5.61).

As the Chief Protector of Aborigines, in *Kullark* A. O. Neville points out, while the ration given to unemployed Aborigines was worth twentytwo cents, that given to unemployed whites was worth seventy cents (2.3.46). In his letter to the minister in *No Sugar* he mentions that the weekly rations for the native costs only one third of the sustenance paid to the white unemployed (1.2.20).

Aborigines who constituted only one percent of the Australian population, represented ten percent of prison inmates and it was more than tripled in Western Australia (Davis, *Writers in Action* 182). In Davis's plays imprisonment is a recurrent image, but its agency is often subverted by depicting Aboriginal incarceration as substitute initiation -- the ritual passage into adulthood. While Shane in *Barungin*, feels that Micky is "headin' for trouble" and would soon be keeping Arnie and Peter company in gaol the way "he's goin'"; to Peegun "[. . .] he's just walkin' out into a big white world and he's gotta learn how to survive. [and] [. . .] he's learnin -- his way. (1.5.29).

"Wetjala's gaol don't frighten", (*Kullark* 2.3.53) Thomas Yorlah in *Kullark*. "gaol's *yuart*, only a *wetjala* thing" (*No Sugar* 4.3.94) to Jimmy and is nothing to worry about. He boasts of being in jail four times for "drinkin', fightin', and snowdroppin' " (*No Sugar* 1.3.27) ie, "pinchin' things off other people's clothes lines" (*No Sugar* 1.3.27). In *The Dreamers*

Eli has occupied almost every cell in Fremantle goal, and has "got his name scratched in all of 'em" (1.2.12). While Aunt Peggy's boy has just been released (1.2.12) Auntie Rose's, boys Reggy and Zac are still in jail (1.6.34). Later young Peter also ends up in Jail for riding in a stolen car though unknowingly.

Joe in *No Sugar*, describes conditions in jail: "plenty of Nyoongahs and some from up North. Tucker's not too bad, better than the Settlement. At least they don't give us bread and fat, and we get real bacca, not nigger twist." (4.3.94). Peter in *Barungin*, observes that "We've just about got them wetjalas outnumbered and we all stick together" (1.6.31). It is part of their survival strategy. Eli in *The Dreamers* details another "All you gotta do is butter 'em [the warders] up a bit. Play it smart" (*The Dreamers* 1.4.18). In *Barungin*, Peter also says the same thing: "it's all right, so long as you jump when the bastards say 'jump'." (1.6.31). He also describes how the Aboriginal inmates "get a kick out of putting it over these dumb screws, specially the Pommy ones", of how they made them believe that Tarney Wallace, the little desert bloke was a cannibal (*Barungin* 1.6.31).

PETER. [. . .]. He keeps telling them he's hungry for meat – any sort of meat. He told one of the screws last week that he had a nice big fat bum, and that man's flesh tastes just like pork. Tarney was only joking, but next day he was ordered to see the prison psychiatrist (1.6.31).

According to Peegun in *Barungin*, “[. . .] in this country you got ten times the chance of ending up inside if you’re black than if you’re white. So you gotta keep a step ahead of the cops” (1.5.29). He considers himself a survivor because “ Well, I keep a mile ahead of the bastards [. . .]” (1.5.29). In *No Sugar*, on being arrested, at Northam, Joe refuses to walk in front of Constable Kerr because in his opinion Kerr was not the sort of bloke Joe wanted to turn his back to (3.4.85). He too is a survivor.

Davis points to the injustice of white systems of law. In *No Sugar*, when Jimmy, Sam and Frank Brown are brought to court, the Justice of the Peace, a Northam cocky farmer is in a hurry to get to a bank auction (1.5.34). The JP, who professes it to be his duty to protect natives and half-castes from alcohol, though willing to listen to Brown’s explanation is unsympathetic and sentences him to “six weeks imprisonment with hard labour” for supplying alcohol to the natives (*No Sugar* 1.5.35). It being his sixth offence related to alcohol Jimmy is promptly sentenced to “three months imprisonment with hard labour” (*No Sugar* 1.5.36) and Sam is given a fine of twenty-five shillings . . . and two and six costs; in default seven days imprisonment with fourteen days time to pay (*No Sugar* 1.5.36). In *Kullark*, Jamie describes the court room where the hearing took place:

JAMIE. You know, Dad, today everything in that court-house was white. White walls, white judge . . . only one black spot in there . . . no three -- me in the box and you two up in

the gallery. Yeah, it's an awful bloody feelin' all up there on your own (2.6.65).

Finally he is let off on a "twelve months good behaviour bond" (*Kullark* 2.6.65) because the judge was impressed when he heard that Jamie was training to be a school teacher, "gonna be part of the system" (*Kullark* 2.6.65). According to Peter, in *The Dreamers*,

PETER. Look, *Nyoongahs* buy their grog from *Wetjalas*, they break the law and they git jugged by *Wetjalas*. The lawyer's white, the cops are white, the magistrate's white, the warden's white, the whole box and dice is white. Put a *Nyoongah* against all them. I tell you we ain't got a bloody chance. (1.4.18).

As Jack Davis points out in his poem "John Pat" and as Shane recites in *Barungin*:

SHANE. 'Write of life', the pious said.

'Forget the past . . . the past is dead.'

But all I see in front of me

Is a concrete floor . . . a cell door . . . and

John Pat. (2.9.60)

.....

The end product of gudiya law

Is a viaduct for fang and claw

And a place to dwell like Roebourne's hell

Of a concrete floor . . . a cell door . . . and

John Pat. (*Barungin* 2.9.60)

The issue of Aboriginal deaths in custody is seen as "both concrete evidence for continuing oppression and metaphor for the meaning of the dispossession which is the inheritance of the Aboriginal people" (Gillam, *Westerly* 131). Mudrooroo points out that the term *barungin*, which means 'to smell the wind', and refers to the survival skills of the Nyoongah people to find, food, water, to forecast the weather and so on, is used metaphorically by Jack Davis in his play *Barungin*, to refer to the number of Aboriginal corpses which pollute the wind since the invasion (viii). As warned by Moyarahn in *Kullark*, it is "the smell of death" which sums up Aboriginal -- European relationships since then. In *The Dreamers* Eli comments:

ELI. I still reckon they knocked old Sandy off and dumped him back in the cell. Look you blokes, I,m tellin', yuh, Sandy was as tough as an old boomer. Slept under bridges, ate 'ard tucker all 'is life. Heart failure, be bugged; number nines killed 'im, that's for sure. (*The Dreamers* 18)

Robert in his speech at the Rotary meeting points out that the first Aboriginal deaths in custody occurred in eighteen thirty-two.

ROBERT. . . . At first they used to hang them just up the terrace there . . . near the causeway. Then they moved the gallows out to Redcliffe, near the racecourse . . . Hangings were public in those days . . . A kind of spectator sport . . . They would carry those poor terrified fellas on a cart along the terrace, then tie them up and blindfold them . . . say a few nice Christian prayers . . . then drop them to their deaths. Sometimes they hung the bodies in chains to rot . . . as a warning to their people . . . It is a war (2.5.53).

After describing the fate of the Aboriginal war heroes Midjitaroo and Yagan he continues: "If they didn't sentence you to gaol . . . a flogging . . . or . . . a hanging . . . you got transportation" and that for this "they established Rottnest Island as a prison" (2.5.54).

ROBERT. . . . In the winter of eighteen eighty-three . . . of a hundred and eighty prisoners . . . sixty died in the space of a few weeks in an influenza epidemic and another thirty of measles . . . For you Rottnest is a holiday resort . . . For us . . . it is what *Auschwitz* must be for the Jews. (2.5.55)

And in the final scene of the play *Barungin*, which resembles a military memorial service, (Mudrooroo viii) a roll of the names of the Aboriginals who died in police custody is recited over Peter's grave. The last name on the list which begins in 1833, a few years after the settlement on the Swan River (later to become Perth) was established,

“had been alive a matter of weeks before the play opened” (Gillam Westerly 128). According to Helen Gilbert the list also commemorates the ‘absent friends’ in Davis’s plays, who though mentioned doesn’t appear on the stage -- the babies buried in the pine plantations in *No Sugar*, the massacred tribes mentioned in *Kullark* and *No Sugar*, and Tim in *In Our Town*.

Mudrooroo, in his foreword to the play *Barungin* points out that “Nyoongah funerals are of great cultural significance being not only a time of mourning, of laying the deceased to rest, but also a time of strengthening family ties through communion” (*Barungin* vii-viii). According to Alec in *Kullark* “the only good thing about funerals” is that “ya get to see people ya ain’t seen for a long time” (*Kullark* 1.1.9), like Auntie Peg and Uncle Eli who had come from the Reserve with Libby and Joe and all the kids; and as Alec had observed, “there was even some *Wongai* from out in the eastern goldfields” (1.4.15). In *Barungin*, which begins on a graveside with a funeral service (1.1.5) Shane comments about the “Big mob there” including relations Granny Doll hadn’t seen for years (*Barungin* 1.2.8).

MEENA. All them cousins, couldn’t get away from “em. Kept shakin’ hands and tellin’ me who they was [. . .] (*Barungin* 1.2.8).

In *Wahngin Country* the protagonist Old Mick contrasts White and Nyoongah funerals:

Ay did you ever notice when white people hold a funeral everything is so orderly. They cry quietly and wipe away their tears on white handkerchiefs and then shake hands politely and solemnly. But Nyoongahs, when we have a funeral, oh brother, we have a ball. I mean we really let it all hang out. You know (he shouts and wails and tears at his hair) and we always have big funerals -- you know, mums, dads, brothers and sisters, first cousins, second cousins, third cousins, nieces, nephews, everybody turns up and everybody has a real good time, even the preacher has a ball, he talks on and on and on. (12).

Self/Other dichotomy

In colonization the invaders attempted to valorize the Self in distinction to the Other. But as Franz Fanon has noted, "To the theory of the 'absolute evil of the native' the theory of the 'absolute evil of the settler' replies" (qtd. in Elder 204). While the invaders viewed the Aborigines as "destitute of any of the feeblest semblance of government, having no rulers or priests, or chief personages of any kind and religion or generally recognized code of moral obligations . . ." (qtd. in Elder 204); the Aborigines considered the invader "A cruel inhumane, barbaric alien" (qtd. in Elder 204). Davis's plays foreground this psycho-political conflict and response. He demonstrates both the Aboriginal and British concepts of the Other as culturally and spiritually inferior to the Self. The often

contradictory political strategies adopted by the British officials are shown to be the result of this Self/Other dichotomy, and both assimilation and genocide to have led to the same tragic results for the Aborigines (Elder 206). Through his plays Davis lays bare the contradictions of Australian colonial discourse.

The office of the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Murray Street, Perth, displays the sign reading "Government of Western Australia, Fisheries, Forestry, Wildlife and Aborigines" (*No Sugar* 1:2:18) and has separate entrances front and rear for whites and blacks respectively. Neville considered Aborigines as "communities whose influence is towards laziness and vice" (*Kullark* 2.1.41). Neville's speech to the Western Australian Historical Society is on the theme of anti-genocide but he practices cultural genocide by strongly advocating the policy of assimilation.

Sister Eileen, the missionary at Moore River Native Settlement, who had been lending books – novels – to some of the natives and was planning to get good books donated to start a new library is informed that the Department doesn't encourage the natives to read. According to Superintendent Neal, his experience in South Africa as well as in Australia, has led him to believe that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing" and that as it is "there's enough troublemakers without giving them ideas" (*No Sugar* 4.4.96). Sister Eileen wonders what Neal would classify the Bible as (*No Sugar* 4.4.96), and protests against the use of

violence by the native policemen to enforce attendance at her religious instruction classes. She'd prefer the Aborigines to "come of their own free will". Neal considers her a "Bloody do-gooder" and threatens to transfer her to another settlement, perhaps Mulla Bulla, on the edge of the Gibson Desert if she doesn't comply with the unofficial directive.

In *Kullark*, it is Lyn, the sympathetic white school teacher, who is called a "flamin' do-gooder" (*Kullark* 1.4.16, 1.6.24). Alec is rude to her when she visits the Yorlah household (*Kullark* 1.6.23) and glares at her all the time she is there. "I been dealing with people like her all me life. If they pay you a visit they're all over you. I bet she's runnin' us down to her flamin' mob right now" (*Kullark* 1.6.25). He also feels that Jamie's "too much mixed up with them white students" (*Kullark* 2.2.44) and fears that "those Wetjalas'll lead 'im on, an' when the chips are down he'll be out on 'is ear." (*Kullark* 2.2.44).

Alec fears that his son Jamie will "finish up marryin' some *Wetjala yok*, 'ave blue eyed kids and 'e won't want nothin' to do with us" (*Kullark* 1.4.17). According to him Jamie is "a Nyoongah [. . .] and 'e should marry a Nyoongah" (*Kullark* 1.4.17). Rosie who feels that Jamie "can please himself who 'e marries" (*Kullark* 1.4.16) calls Alec is a "plain bloody racist" since he believes that the marriage of his sister Mary to a *Wetjala* is different and all right, especially since Ol' Bill brings a flagon around now an' again (*Kullark* 1.4.17).

ROSIE. [. . .] every year she brings me tea towels, and every

year she tells me to keep 'em nice and clean. Just because she's married white she tries to think white. She'll always be black. She's blacker than me (*Kullark* 1.4.17).

But in *In Our Town* noticing the growing affection between David and Sue it is Sue's parents who fear of the consequences since "the town's starting to talk"(2.8.47). Milly, David's mother is unperturbed as her grandfather who was a Scotsman had lived with her grandmother who was a full-blood Aborigine, for thirty years. (2.10.53).

Sam considers the wetjelas strange "what have they got, four walls, always seem to be in a hurry, always up against time" (*In Our Town* 1.9.23) and points out that there are essential differences between Black and White Australians. He feels that he will never understand the wetjala that "they have a different outlook on life to us and sort of sly approach" (*In Our Town* 2.9.50) and advises his son: "We don't need them David, we never have and never ever will. Our world is different to theirs".

SAM. [. . .] the wetjala was swinging by his tail when we were a nation of people. We had laws and customs and a religion while they were yelling and throwing stones at one another in some jungle.

DAVID. [*laughing*] Yeah, but they caught up, Pop, and passed us.

SAM. Sure they did, one day they accidentally discovered

how to make iron -- learnt about gun powder -- thousands of years after the Chinese and they learnt how to make a gun. (*In Our Town* 2.9.50).

But he warns David that in the combat of the mind “there’s one thing wetjala’s don’t like”.

SAM. Direct attack. You see they like to talk, dilly-dally around with things. ‘that’s when you gotta get in and attack them when they’re not ready. Attack, that’s the way.’ (*In Our Town* 2.9.51).

In *Barungin*, Meena feels that one “can’t hurt wetjelas since they’ve got no conscience” but in Robert’s opinion, “we just gotta help them find it” (2.4.52). David who feels that “they’ll never understand us” (*In Our Town* 2.9.50), however, believes that “Underneath, deep down, we’re all the same. (*In Our Town* 2.9.50). Jim Moss sees David as a threat to his survival and he himself is a threat to the survival of David and his community.

The play *In Our Town* illustrates the “psychological ploys of denial and rationalization, which occur in situations of racial conflict” – of the individual acting through a generalized reference to the community at large (*In Our Town* xi). The Barman refuses to serve David liquor (*In Our Town* 2.1.40) and justifies his action with “Look, don’t blame me. I’m just following orders” (*In Our Town* 2.1.40). In *No Sugar*, Sergeant Carroll

informs Joe that they were only following orders in burning down the camps at the Government Well Aboriginal Reserve Northam.

Tim, is an absent character who is mentioned throughout the play *In Our Town*. A stray who had come to live with the Millimurras when he was about thirteen or fourteen, he had put up his age and together with David, had joined the army at seventeen. According to David, Tim was a real dreamer and as a kid who was always scared of the dark, of his own shadow, and physical violence, he was not cut out for the army (*In Our Town* 1.15.34). David felt that the military authorities had some notion that blacks would make good forward scouts. They sent Tim up ahead of patrol and in spite of reporting a large concentration of Japs on the side of a hill, their position and even their numbers, the Lieutenant wasn't satisfied and sent Tim a third time. The next day he was found dead. He had managed to stuff his field dressing into the wound in his chest, but it wasn't enough. The starving Japs had cannibalized him: "had stripped all the flesh off his legs, his thighs" (1.15.34). David believed that "If he had been white it wouldn't have happened" (*In Our Town* 1.15.34) and that "It was cold indifference which caused Tim's death (*In Our Town* 2.9.50). Towards the end of the play, *In Our Town* Sue feels that her family, Mrs. Rose and the rest of the town are ready to do that [cannibalise] to David, just like the Japs had cannibalized his eighteen year old cousin Tim (*In Our Town* 1.15.37).

David and Sue decide to go back together to the town, to confront them and “shake their morality as it has never been shook before” (*In Our Town* 2.15.66). And that’s what Sam had advised David: “attack. [. . .]” (2.15.66).

Davis has declared that “There will always be differences . . . between black and white” and as Shoemaker points out he speaks optimistically of his fair-skinned grandchildren who ‘talk with an Aboriginal patois . . . [have] Aboriginal behavioural patterns and Aboriginal speech patterns’ (qtd. in Elder 212). But in *The Dreamers* the character of Robert, a legal aid officer, who is depicted as the product of assimilation is unsatisfying. While Dolly in *The Dreamers* speaks contemptuously of the “barefooted blackfella”, in *Barungin* Shane and Peegun cannot tolerate “the bloody coconuts” who as Peegun explains are “two-tone black on the outside, white on the inside”; (1.2.12) -- “a bloody black bureaucrat” says Shane. At school Little Doll who is “not really black” feels insulted at being called a porpoise (*Barungin* 1.2.9).

Subversion

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin emphasize “an inevitable tendency towards subversion” as “a characteristic of dominated literature” (33). According to them:

Directly and indirectly, in Salman Rushdie’s phrase, the ‘Empire writes back’ to the imperial ‘centre’, not only through nationalist assertion, proclaiming itself central and

self-determining, but even more radically by questioning the bases of European and British metaphysics, challenging the world-view that can polarize centre and periphery in the first place [. . .]. [post-colonial] writers [. . .] have [. . .] rewritten particular works from the English 'canon' with a view to restructuring European 'realities' in post-colonial terms, not simply by reversing the hierarchical order, but by interrogating the philosophical assumptions on which that order was based. (*Empire Writes Back* 33)

Sheep Stealing is a recurring incident in the plays of Jack Davis. According to Helen Gilbert, the small but significant act of defiance enacted through sheep stealing raises important ideological issues and points to the difference in Black and White approaches to the landscape; and as sheep represents the landscape which has been claimed as the property of the Settlers, through sheep stealing the Aboriginal characters make a symbolic reclamation of the land. In *Kullark* Yagan is accused of sheep stealing. In *No Sugar*, while Sam goes to borrow old Skinny Martin's cart to take Cissie to hospital, Jimmy plans to solve the meat problem by stealing his sheep: "We'll git one of the skinny old bastard's sheep and bring it home on his own cart" (*No Sugar* 1.8.46). Uncle Herbie is imprisoned for stealing sheep and he blames the sheep: "Silly kookanjari. She thinks she's a yonga and poke her head through the snare and snare catch 'em there and then she have her nyanyi. First

time I caught two in one snare" (*In Our Town* 1.14.32). According to Helen Gilbert, Jimmy Munday and Uncle Herbie are Aboriginal trickster figures (65).

The trickster, a personification of ambivalence (Radin xiii) is found among the ancient Greeks, the Chinese, the Japanese and in the semitic world (Radin xxiii). Laughter, humour and irony permeate everything the trickster does. (Radin xxiv). According to Paul Radin: trickster is at one and the same time creator and destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes others and who is always duped himself. He wills nothing consciously. At all times he is constrained to behave as he does from impulses over which he has no control. He knows neither good nor evil yet he is responsible for both. He possesses no values, moral or social, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his actions all values come into being (xxiii).

Kerenyi describes the trickster as a primordial being of the same order as the gods and heroes of mythology, (175) [who] could be defined as the timeless root of all picaresque creations of world literature (Radin 176)

According to the Native Canadian writer, Thomas King, the trickster figure allows the indigenous writer to create a particular kind of world in which the Judeo-Christian concern with good and evil and order and disorder is replaced with the more Native concern for balance and

harmony...[and] speak to the nature of the world and the relatedness of all living things (xiii) and according to Moses, it is emblematic of indigenous humour and spirit in the face of both historical and existential dilemmas (375).

Eli and Peter are the trickster figures in the play *The Dreamers*, seeking chances to subvert white systems. In their interactions with the white world they become natural actors, and it may be seen as a means of survival. Peter fakes that he had lost his bus fare and on the point of being thrown off the bus is helped out by an old *wetjala* lady who pays his fare (25), while Eli who calls himself old Hawkeye or Patchy, disguised as a one eyed man fleeces white shoppers on Thursday nights: "Got bad eyes, boss, this one got catarac', this one goin' fast. Can you spare forty cents, boss? God bless you, sir, God bless you, missus (2.2.59). He ends up collecting ten dollars and one cents! (2.2.58) as patcheye.

The trickster Peegun, in *Barungin* had left Derby, Kununurra, Broome when it became too hot for him: "Her bloke come home at three o'clock in the mornin', says somethin' about a shotgun, so out the fuckin' window I went, man, in me jocks, left a brand new pair of Levis' and a pair of R.M.Williams boots behind" (*Barungin* 1.2.12) admits that he's "too old to change, [. . .] and too young to carry around an arse full of pellets" and senses trouble when he hears that Arnie, Meena's husband is getting out on parole (*Barungin* 1.2.12). Though he had been doing "a

bit pubwork, bit a sortin' pearl shell . . . few games a cards [. . .], was broke at the moment and plans to rectify it by going busking to Freo, with Shane playing the guitar and himself the didgeridoo. The fact that he has lost his licence doesn't bother him. In *Wahngin Country* when short of money Old Mick strikes a variety of poses and gets his photograph taken to be sold to tourists as "a postcard of a genuine Australian Aborigine" (6).

Other plays also give glimpses of such characters. When the sergeant leaves after checking their bag for liquor, "David rolls up his trouser legs and produces a bottle of whisky from his sock" (*In Our Town* 1.3.9). When brought to court for being under the influence of alcohol, Jimmy tries to delay court proceedings and keeps the judging waiting.

JIMMY. Sorry, sir, I was on the shit bucket . . . toilet . . . Got a guts ache, sir (*No Sugar* 1.5.35).

As the trial proceeds Jimmy admits nothing, Sam takes responsibility for anything and everything their actions amount to a subversive contempt of the colonial court -- a refusal to acknowledge, to engage and to accept the white processes (Dibble 95). As Gilbert observes, through his amusing antics as performer and entertainer, Jimmy transforms the prison cell and courtroom into a form of theatre where he asserts control over the spaces designed to segregate and punish them (67) He has contempt for the Native Protector as well. Out of jail and unrepentant, Jimmy urgently pesters Miss Dunn and Neville for

a train fare to Northam, so that he may leave by the mixed goods at eleven and on finally getting his travel voucher changes his plans and decides to catch the five o'clock train (*No Sugar* 1.7). Walking off from the Chief Protector's office with his travel voucher, Jimmy exclaims: "Native Protector, couldn't protect my dog from fleas" (*No Sugar* 1.7.44). When Sergeant Carrol couldn't immediately comply with Milly's request for more blankets, Gran comments too expresses the same feeling: "An' you're supposed to be native 'tector" (*No Sugar* 1.7.44)

Irony

As a doubled or split discourse, which has the potential to subvert from within (Hutcheon, *Last Post* 170), irony becomes a popular rhetorical strategy for working within existing discourses and contesting them at the same time (171) and according to Hutcheon, is a powerful subversive tool in the re-thinking and re-addressing of history (Hutcheon, *Last Post*. 171). Citing Raymond Williams, Hutcheon points out that all national literatures develop from imitation of a dominant pattern to assimilation or internalization of it, to a stage of open revolt, where what was initially excluded by the dominant pattern gets revalorized (176). "The challenge is to use the existing language, even if it is the voice of a dominant other -- and yet speak through it: to disrupt . . . the codes and forms of the dominant language in order to reclaim speech for itself" (qtd. in Hutcheon 177).

Often combined with some sort of self-reflexivity, irony allows a text to work within the constraints of the dominant, while placing those constraints as constraints in the foreground and thus undermining their power (Hutcheon 176).

Though dualities abound in the ironist's world, the stances he may take range from parody and innuendo through sarcasm and self-disparagement to absurdity and nihilism. . . . At its best, the ironic stance provokes a serious deliberation onto the problems that led to dualities in the first place (qtd. in Hutcheon 177).

As the trope of the unsaid, irony becomes a possible way to encode a subtext which will deflect the risks of "[f]ull visibility and accessibility . . . [which] constitute an inherent danger for the colonized" (qtd. in Hutcheon 178). Hence Lorainne Wier points out that, irony in the hands of those who exercise genuine power is very different from the same device in the hands of those classified as powerless and that among those whose basic communication may frequently depend upon the skilled use and reception of ironic utterance -- that is, among the powerless, irony will be all the more powerful. (qtd. in Hutcheon 178)

According to Stephen Slemon, by using the strategies of the dominant culture, parody gives "new meaning to old forms" (31) and thus challenge its discursive processes from within (*Last Post* 20). A "parodic"

repetition of imperial “textuality” sets itself specifically in opposition to the interpellative power of colonialism . . . (Slemon, *Last Post* 4)

Often the official white versions of history are “constantly edited and interrupted by black voices questioning the truth” (Turcotte 11). In *No Sugar*, the special centenary edition of the newspaper *Western Mail*, the voice of the white society features a report of the celebration. It describes a tableau “Commemorat[ing] the pioneers” whose lives “Were a steadfast performance of duty in the face of difficulty and danger. With them was a reminder of the dangers they faced, in the shape of three lorries . . . carrying Aborigines” (*No Sugar* 1.1.15). While Sam, with “*Koorawoorung*” an expression of disbelief ridicules the “Nyoongahs corroboreein’ to a *wetjalas* brass band”, (*No Sugar* 1.1.15) Jimmy points out the fact that the “[. . .] stupid bloody blackfellas” (*No Sugar* 1.1.15) were doing so “’cause them bastards took our country” (*No Sugar* 1.1.16). According to Turcotte the very fact that Joe reads the words in the newspaper “falteringly” “reinforces how alien the message and the white language are” (12).

No Sugar dramatized an Australia Day ceremony at the Moore River Settlement. The purpose of the gathering, as described by Sister Eileen is “to pledge our allegiance to the King, [. . .] to celebrate the birth of this wonderful young country [. . .] and to give thanks to God for what he had provided” (*No Sugar* 4.5.97). According to her, Mr. Neal, Matron Neal, Mr. Neville and herself “are but His humble servants, sent by Him

to serve your needs" (*No Sugar* 4.5.97). At this the whites clap and the Aborigines remain silent.

Neville, in his long speech, describes the birth of the nation "one hundred and forty-six years ago at Sydney Cove in the Eastern States", contrasts the contemporary world "in the grip of depression" represented by the unemployed men he saw on the road to "this small corner of the Empire" [the Settlement] where everyone is "provided for with adequate food and shelter" (*No Sugar* 4.5.97) to which Jimmy mutters about "weevilly flour" (*No Sugar* 4.5.97). Neville goes on to remind them why they are there:

NEVILLE. [. . .] you are preparing yourselves here to take your place in Australian society, to live as other Australians live, and to live alongside other Australians; to learn to enjoy the privileges and to shoulder the responsibilities of living like the white man, to be treated equally, not worse, not better, under the law (*No Sugar* 4.5.97).

To introduce the theme of assimilation Neville says:

NEVILLE. [. . .]. Occasionally some of you might ponder why you are here –

and Jimmy comments:

JIMMY. [a little louder] Too bloody right (*No Sugar* 4.5.97).

At the end of the speech all sing the hymn *There is a Happy Land*. While the whites sing the original version, the Aborigines substitute a parody of the words.

ALL. There is a happy land,
Far, far away.
No sugar in our tea,
Bread and butter we never see.
That's why we're gradually
Fading away. (*No Sugar* 4.5.98).

As Dibble and MacIntyre observes, their deviant compliance enables subjectivity and solidarity, and destabilises the authority of the Chief Protector of Aborigines – A. O. Neville. On Neville's order to stop it they repeat the parody even louder.

NEVILLE. Never in my life have I witnessed such a disgraceful exhibition. [. . .] I can tell you that you will live to rue this day. There will be no privileges from now on.

JIMMY. [*calling out*] Rotten spuds and onions?

NEVILLE. Be quiet! And there will be no Christmas this year!
No Christmas!

JIMMY. What, a dried up orange and a puddin'?

NEVILLE. Will you be quiet? [. . .] You must listen to me.

JIMMY. (*approaching NEVILLE*) No, you listen to me Mr. A.O.

You come an' eat supper with us, tonight, right? Bread and drippin' and black tea. Are you game to try it? (*No Sugar* 4.5.98-99)

Jimmy questions him about voting for Jimmy Mitchell, of their removal from Northam under false allegations and continues to mock the hypocrisy of the whites until he collapses at the foot of the flagpole clutching his chest.

The play *In Our Town* begins with the Anzac Day ceremony in which Mr. Moss remembers the soldiers who had fallen in battle to free the nation from "the tyranny and oppression that became the lot of those invaded by those barbaric forces" (*In Our Town* 1.1.1). Assuring that democracy would never allow "the evil that became the lot of the Jewish race to happen ever again" (*In Our Town* 1.1.1), he affirms that "Australia as a young and virile nation has always stood firm against racism. Racism is barbarism in its infancy and is a hidden menace" (*In Our Town* 1.1.1). But the same Mr. Moss deprives David Millimurra of his chance to buy a house in town and to start a business, because he is Aboriginal.

Christianity

In an interview with Shoemaker, Davis acknowledges the fact that he is having "a gentle dig at Christianity. [. . .] Not too badly but I'm having a dig at the fact that they are part of Aboriginal existence; therefore, they have to be recognized and they are recognized" (45). He also adds that "They helped to destroy Aboriginal culture, they did not

permit talking in Aboriginal languages and that they separated the children their parents" (46).

Eleanor Bourke points out that European missionaries from various Christian denominations started to arrive in Australia in the 1820's, and that while they expressed goodwill and concern for Aboriginal people, they were more intrusive and disruptive than other Europeans, because they endeavoured to break down belief systems, destroy ceremonies and wreck the very fabric of Aboriginal society (6). Critics have pointed out that the Missions they established had been instrumental in undermining tribal and familial solidarity, in the appropriation of land for white settlers and in the eventual destruction of the Aboriginal race (Gilbert 67; Gilbert and Tompkins 43). However, citing Ron Brunton's claim Bourke E. observes that at a later stage, Christianity had helped place Aboriginal people in control over the direction of their own lives, had strengthened individual self esteem and revitalized communities (12). Davis, himself acknowledges that it was as a member of the Brookton Aboriginal Church that he learnt to address a group with confidence and discuss politics, religion, and Aboriginal affairs (Chesson 125) However, he feels that nothing the missions gave could ever compensate for the loss of family continuity

On capturing Yagan he is sent to Carnac Island, "there to be instructed in Christianity and the British way of life" (*Kullark* 1.7.29). In *No Sugar*, Jimmy boasts that he had been the leadin' choir boy at New

Norcia Mission (1.3.27) and Milly proudly acknowledges that, “he used to sing ‘Ave Maria’ solo real good” (*No Sugar* 1.3.27). In *In Our Town* Uncle Herbie complains that they were not allowed to use their own language songs and dances but could only sing church songs.

UNCLE HERBIE. [. . .] Kia! Sing only church songs.

Jesus he liked the diddle chillun

Diddle chillun ob de world

Red and yeller black an white

They all precious in his sight

All de diddle chillun ob de world

(*In Our Town* 1.5.12).

Gran is proud of the fact that Milly is “proper church married” and has got “paper to prove it, and birth ‘tificate” (1.7.43). However Gran and Milly are not too enthusiastic about asking help from the vicar at St. John’s.

GRAN. [*adopting a praying attitude*] Yeah, when he come to

Gubment Well he goes like that with his eyes closed and he

says the Lord will help you, and now he prays with his eyes

open, ‘cause time ‘fore last Wow Wow hit him on the leg

‘. . . musta wanted a bit a’ holy meat. (*No Sugar* 1.7.43).

Alec in *Kullark* complains about the “long -winded missionary” from the Nyoongah church “ravin’ on” (1.1.8) at the funeral service of the old man “about livin’ or dyin’” (*Kullark* 1.1.8), “playing on people’s feelings”,

“trying to frighten people into goin’ to ‘is church” (1.1.8 *Kullark*). According to Alec “’e can’t lose, it’s like an each way bet: If ’e can’t get ya to ’is church that don’t matter, ’e’ll still get to ’eaven ’cause ’e tried. It’s even better than an each way bet, cause ’e bets on the whole bloody field”. To Alec “ ’E’s just a bookie’s clerk, and ’im up there, “e’s sort of in charge of like the TAB in the sky” (*Kullark* 1.1.9). In *Barungin* Meena and Shane complains about the American fundamentalist preacher who went droning on at the funeral of Eli. Meena comments: “[. . .] He must ’a’ been vaccinated with a fuckin’ gramophone needle. I thought he was never gonna stop” (*Barungin* 1.2.8). According to Shane “that’s all they live for: preachin’ over Nyoongahs in their graves” (*Barungin* 1.2.9) and he goes on to imitate the preacher:

SHANE. [*imitating the PREACHER*]: Brothers and sisters! We are all sinners. Believe me, if this man suffered in this world he will find peace and justice -- on the big reserve on high. Eli was but a sinner. I repeat myself: a sinner! [*resuming himself*] Gawd, if uncle Eli could ’a’ heard him.

MEENA. He probably would ’a bitten him for a cask and packet of Winnies. (*Barungin* 1.2.9).

In *The Dreamers* when Dolly asks Roy to say grace, Shane wonders:

SHANE. Do we only say grace when we are eating kangaroo?

ROY. [*putting his spoon back on his plate and swallowing*] We thank you, Lord, for what --

WORRU. You put some bacon in this?

ROY. We thank you.

WORRU. Bacon, *wah?*

SHANE. Ssh, ssh, Popeye, close your eyes.

ROY. We thank you, Lord.

WORRU. What for? Can't eatr with me eyes closed.

ROY. We thank you, Lord, for what we have got.

WORRU. [*to SHANE, pointing upwards*] I forgot about that
fella up there.

.....
ROY. We thank you, Lord, for what we got for... your sake
an' ours too. (*The Dreamers* 1.6.39-40)

Eli, after collecting ten dollars as patcheye gestures skywards: "The big boss! You up there! You listenin'? Hope you been givin' out some of them blessin's I been promisin' them wetjelas." (2.2.59). On singing the hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers', Eli wonders:

ELI. 'ow can you be a soldier an' a Christian? Lot a rot;
soldiers used to chuck Christians to the lions. I'm a
Christian, Freo Prison Christian. Sin't nobody gonna chuck
me to the lions. The Wetjala's a lion, he eats. Aw, he eats,
he eats everything land, trees, rivers, forests, even people,
'specially people. I 'member old grandfather Kooroop used
to say: 'don't trust the Wetjala, he's a real widartji. He'll kill

you for sport and eat your brains and kidney fat'. (*The Dreamers* 2.2.59).

In Moore River, Sister Eileen had given Uncle Herbie a "Bible book", and Joe had been given one in Fremantle Jail. According to Uncle Herbie, "[. . .] wetjala cunning fella alright. When they come here they had the Bible and we had the land . . . now --

Joe& Uncle Herbie: Now they've got the land and we've got the Bible! (*In Our Town* 2.5.44).

In *The Dreamers*, Robert explains that, the "belief in the Bible is based on faith, not fact." (2.2.65)

ROBERT. Now you take the Bible, the story of Noah's Ark. It would have been physically impossible for Noah to transport every species of animal on earth for forty days and forty nights.

[. . .]

ROBERT. [. . .] Noah would have had to have a staff of thousands to fees all those animals and look after them. (*The Dreamers* 2.2.65).

Uncle Herbie also complains that "Mr. Crawford and his missus, they go to church every Sunday, then he come home and knock my snares down. Christians! (*In Our Town* 2.5.43).

In his unpublished play *Wahngin Country*, Old Mick narrates how his friend Ernie, after entering St. Mary's Cathedral during the service, had described the church as "a bloody casino":

Well one bloke standin' up the front all dressed up with red clothes on, and these little boys with red and white clothes on. And the big watjella in the red clothes slings out dominos robiscum, and the watjellas sing out et cum spirit toto. 'Jesus Christ' says Mick 'what that mean?' "My father can play dominoes better than our father can and them watjellas are saying 'pigs arse he can', and it's a casino alright, cause there's these two blokes walkin' down the aisle takin' side bets. (7)

WORKS CITED

- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. 1989. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Bourke, Colin, and Helen Cox. "Two Laws: One Land." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 49-64.
- Bourke, Eleanor. "Australia's First Peoples: Identity and Population." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 35-48
- Broome, Richard. *Aboriginal Australians: Black Responses to White Dominance 1788-1994*. 1982. 2nd ed. St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1994.
- Chesson, Keith. *Jack Davis: A Life Story*. Melbourne: Dent, 1988.
- Davis, Jack. "Barungin (Smell the Wind)." *Writers in Action: The Writer's Choice Evenings*. by Gerry Turcotte, Sydney: Currency Press, 1990. 179-202.
- . *Barungin (Smell the Wind)*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1989.
- . "The Dreamers." *Meanjin* 43.1 (1984): 44-48.
- . *The Dreamers*. 1982. Sydney: Currency Press, 1996.
- . *In Our Town*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1992

- . *Kullark/The Dreamers*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1982.
- . *No Sugar*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1986.
- . *Wahngin Country*. ts. Unpublished play. First Performed in Perth in 1992.
- Elder, Arlene A. "Self, Other and Post-Historical Identity in Three Plays by Jack Davis." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 25 (1990): 204-15.
- Gilbert, Helen and Joanne Tompkins. *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Gilbert, Helen. "'Talking Country': Place and Displacement in Jack Davis's Theatre." *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994. 60-71
- Gilliam, Cliff. "Hesperian Varieties: New Western Australia Drama at the 1988 Festival of Perth." *Westerly* 2 June 1988 : 127-134.
- Hodge, Bob and Vijay C. Mishra. *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991.
- Hutcheon, Linda. "'Circling the Downspout of Empire' ". Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Eds. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post -Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991. 167-189.
- King, Thomas, Cheryl Calver and Helen Hoy. Eds. *The Native in Literature*. Ontario: ECW Press, 1987.

- Mudrooroo. "Black Reality." *Barungin (Smell the wind)*. Davis, Jack. Sydney: Currency Press, 1989. viii-ix.
- Radin, Paul. *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*. New York: Schocken Book, 1956.
- Reynolds, Henry. *The Law of the Land*. 1987. Ringwood: Penguin, 1988.
- Slemon Stephen. "Modernism's Last Post." Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Eds. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991. 1-11.
- Stone, Sharman N. ed. *Aborigines in White Australia: A Documentary History of the Attitudes Affecting Official Policy and the Australian Aborigine, 1697-1973*. Victoria: Heinemann Educational Books, 1974.
- Tatz, Colin. *Race Politics in Australia*. Armidale: University of New England Publishing Unit, 1979.

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

Chapter V

Staging History and Resistance

My name is english

But I know my roots

my tribe my skin name

I am irrefutably

indisputably

proudly Aboriginal

(Davis, "I Am" 21)

Story telling

In traditional Aboriginal society, history of the community was preserved/maintained by the storyteller, who relayed it as an entertainment and an educational device. "Aware of the audience and of his/her own position as entertainer, the story-teller revises history in/through every performance by making the past 'speak' to the present" (Gilbert and Tompkins 127). He also makes improvisational references to highly current incidents or to the reactions of the audience. While story telling foregrounds the role of the interlocuter and the specific context of language utterance to create meanings that are changeable and unfixed, written history, avoids interpretative nuances, abstracts the narrative from any enunciative context, and attempts to suggest that meaning is fixed in language (Gilbert & Tompkins 126-27). Gilbert and Tompkins point out that while a knowledgeable local audience will understand the

cultural nuances, jokes, and specific allusions or references, outsiders will not necessarily comprehend them and that factors such as race, class, gender, age, and social affiliation affect the responses of individual viewers (128). These discrepancies, impact upon the performance and reception of the tale and refuse the closure common to western narrative discourses such as history (128).

Story telling relies on imagination, recitation, and improvisation. The narrative is augmented with “dramatic action, audience interaction, dance, song, and/or music [. . .]” (Gilbert & Tompkins 126) and this highly theatrical mode of communication transfers easily to the stage. Its presentational style and format challenge the naturalistic conventions by which western theatre usually stages its subject matter (127). Stories (both ‘traditional’ and post-contact) that constitute indigenous history, compete with and unsettle empirical histories and their associated theatrical discourses. Davis’s characters often tell stories. Positioned within a larger dramatic text, they mirror the ways in which the indigenous culture has been subsumed by European settlement. In Jack Davis’s plays, the old characters are the ones who usually narrate the stories. As repositories of Aboriginal culture they maintain and circulate tribal memory through their stories.

In *The Dreamers*, Worru, a born story -teller Worru regales Peter, Roy and Eli with the story of how Cornell and Milbart travelled on a train for the first time (1.4.19-20).

WORRU. Well, they was gitten old fellas, them two, Cornell and Milbart, they was stayin' in Wagin an' they wanted to git to Katanning Show, see? And they was *wayarning* of the train, real *wayarning*. [*Laughing*] Anyways, they got in a railway carriage and that train was goin' *keert kooliny*, *keert kooliny* round them bends and them corners. An'-an'-they was . . . they was . . .

He coughs and splutters.

sitting close together, like.

He laughs again and claps his hands.

Anyway, they went around one corner and Cornell got a real fright and he shouted 'choo' and he pushed Milbart like that.

He pushes Peter almost off his seat.

And he said, he said, 'Wart *arny yit*, Milbart, git ober in de udder corner an' help me balance this thing before it bloody tips over.'

They all laugh, Worru coughs. (The Dreamers 1.4.19)

A repository of tribal lore he recounts what happens to the *kunya* (soul) of dead people.

WORRU. [when Aboriginal people] "*noych* [die], their *kunya* soul] would go and stay in the *moodgah* tree, some time for a l-o-o-ng time, an' when the *moodgah* flowers were gone,

summertime, their *kunya* would leave the *moodgah* an' go to *Watjerup* [Rottnest]. That way, over the sea, *Watjerup*, thaty way, *boh-oh*. (*The Dreamers* 1.4.20).

He remembers that there are lots of *moodgah* trees at Mogumber old settlement because it has been *Nyoongah* country for a long time, that being very strong they killed other trees growing near them, and that "only *boolya* man can go there near the *moodgah* because he too is strong, an' 'e can drink water an' take 'oney from the *moodgah*. Any body else, that's warrah, they could be finish" (*The Dreamers* 1.4.21). To him Mogumber is "warrah place . . ."

WORRU. [. . .] awright daytime, but *gnank weerdiny*, couldn't walk around stay near the fire. [*Shuddering*.] Too many *tjennaks*, *moorlies*, an', an', *widartjies*. [*Gesturing north*.] They come that way. They was real bad. Round face, an' they was white, just like *Wetjalas*, an' they 'ad red eyes, an' red 'air, an' them scream, an' shout, sing out in the night time, in the pine plantation, jus' like *koolongahs* [who had been murdered and buried there] (*The Dreamers* 1.6.30).

According to Jack Davis, Mogumber is an Anglicization of moodgumbar, which in the Nyoongah dialect means 'place of the moodgar' and it is coincidental that both Rottnest and Mogumber figure so strongly in the destruction of Aboriginal society (Chesson 27).

Worru also remembers Milbart who died long ago at Moore River, Billy Kimberly, who was *moorditj* [good] with a *kylie* [boomerang] and “could make it go three times ‘round that football ground and come back right near his *tjenna* [feet]”. When he rode his horse “you couldn’t see him at night ‘cause ‘e was black and the ‘orse was black”. Used to “allus carry a long *gidtji*, nor’-west one”, and how kids used to hide in the bushes and call out ‘*Wahrdung . . . Wahrdung . . . Black Crow . . . Black Crow . . .*’ and then “*doogearkiny* [flee] down the river” at his approach (*The Dreamers* 1.6.29). Winarn , the “ol’ fella with *doot* arm . . . pinched a bottle a whisky from his boss, . . . got cruel drunk . . . rolled in the fire and burnt his arm right off” (*The Dreamers* 1.6.30).

Through his stories Worru describes personal experiences, social events and mythical stories of the Dreaming. The story of the black trackers Billy Kimberley and Bluey, of shifting from grass Valley to Mogumber, of life in the Settlements of Moore River and Mogumber together make up fragments of communal history. He tells of his life as a young man and of his friend Milbart, with the Dancer performing much of the narrated action. These stories are his family’s history and Worru maintains and circulates tribal memory. He also has many truths to tell. Through the use of Nyoongah words and phrases, his tales also transmit fragments of a language no longer familiar to the younger generations.

In *Barungin* Granny Doll remembers how “the old fellas used to tell yarns” about “all sorts of things. About our lot, the massacres, the

burnings, the chains and the floggings. Pinjarra, Ballagin, Arthur River, Vasse, Kondinin" (2.3.45); she remembers how Old Grandfather used to tell about his father and his grandfather, who when on a hunt, used to "stand on the side of the hill and *barungin, barungin*. . . . smell the wind, 'coz that wind used to talk to him and tell him where the kangaroo and the emus and the ducks were, and the rain" (2.3.45). But she complains that "now the wind's got too many smells: motor car, grog, smokes, you want meat now, you go to the supermarket" (*Barungin* 2.3.45).

According to Granny Doll *Koolbardi* 'The Magpie' was their dad's *Nyoongah* name, and she regrets the fact that she never really had a *Nyoongah* name, though "old *Koolbardi* -- that's old Popeye Joe -- used to call [her] "*Tjitti Tjitti*" meaning wagtail", and *Marta Booin* Booin because she had skinny legs (*Barungin* 1.7.35). According to her their family name 'Wallitch' came from '*Walitj*' meaning the night-hawk. And "when some *Nyoongah* is gonna die, he always comes over and screams out", like the night the old man [Shane's Grandad] died. She remembers that "up at Moore River, old camp, plenty of *Walitj* up there" (*Barungin* 1.7.36).

Hodge and Mishra describes 'myth' as an abstract structure, a meaning potential . . . which is reproduced in a series of tellings, which will be different depending on occasion and purpose, narrator and audience (Hodge & Mishra 88). The story of *wahrdahng* the black crow and *kurlbahrdi* the magpie, is one of the few surviving legends of the

South West and is the favourite of Jack Davis (Chesson 57-60). The version used in the plays was passed on to the author by his stepfather, Bert (kurrahtj) Bennel, in the early 1930s. In *Barungin* Granny Doll remembers that *Koolbardi*, 'The Magpie' was their dad's *Nyoongah* name and that it was like his totem. She goes on to retell the story he used to tell about the magpie and the crow -- *Koolbardi* and *Wahrdung*.

GRANNY DOLL: Well this *Koolbardi* -- that's the magpie -- and this *Wahrdung* -- that's the crow -- they was brothers, see. This was the time of *kundum*, dreams, see, and they was bi-i-ig strong men, and they both had beautiful whi-i-ite feathers. They used to fly around the lakes and the water before the *wetjala* drained off the swamps, and they was *moorditj* hunters, but they was cruel jealous, jealous about who was the best lookin'. So all the old fellas got real sick an' tireda listenin' to these two arguin' day after day, night after night. So they called a meetin' and they said to *Wahrdung* and *Koolbardi*, 'Now look, you two, we're dick and tired of you arguing all the time, so you go over there an' fight it out an' see who's the best'. So that magpie and the crow they flew straight up in the air and they fought and fought, *numbly, bulkily, numbly, bulkily*.

[GRANNY DOLL *laughs and throws her arms about.*]

Numbly round and round they went, but they didn't know they was gittin' closer to the ground, getting, closer and closer when suddenly -- [*Slamming her hands together*] *Tjoppuly*, straight into this lake of bla-a-ack sticky mud.

LITTLE DOLL: Yuck.

GRANNY DOLL: Anyway, *Koolbardi* was the first to git out.

He crawled out of the mud and flopped down half covered in that bla-a-ack sticky mud and then after a long time *Wahrdung* come out the mud and flopped down beside him, and he was covered all over in that bla-a-ack mud, and that's how they are today, *Unna* [Isn't it] Meena? And whenever that old fella camped, them magpies would be there. At Government Well, in Northam where we used to camp, there was a family of magpies in a big old gum tree, and they have new babies every year. (*Barungin* 1.7.34-35)

The same story is retold by Alec in *Kullark* as one of the stories told by the old man whose funeral he had just attended. As Kateryna Arthur points out “[. . .] orally delivered stories change from telling to telling, not only in terms of the heteroglossia of the situation, to use Bakhtin's term, but also in terms of primary content (57).

ALEC: [*animatedly*] Oh yeah, yeah. Now the magpie and the crow was brothers, and they both 'ad beautiful white feathers, and they were always arguin' about which one

was the most beautiful. Anyway one day they decided to fly up into the sky and fight it out. So Wahrdung, that's the crow, and Koolbahrdis, that's the magpie, they flew into the air, and they fought and they fought, round and round, *nunbuly bukuly*, up and down. Anyway, they didn't know they was getting' closer an' closer to the ground, then all of a sudden, *tjoppul*, they fell straight into this pool of black sticky mud. Well Koolbahrdis, 'e was the first to get out, and he took off into the sky half covered in mud, and poor ol' Wahrdung 'e was the last to get out, and when 'e flew up into the sky 'e was black all over. (*Kullark* 1.1.10-11).

In her religious instruction class in *No Sugar* Sister Eileen, the missionary at Moore River Native Settlement tells from memory the story of Nativity, of the visit of the shepherds and the three wise men, and of King Herod's anger at the birth of the baby to be King of the Jews. "He ordered his soldiers to kill every first-born baby boy under two years old. So Mary and Joseph didn't want them to kill the baby Jesus, so they had to flee from Bethlehem. They wrapped the baby in a blanket and crept away in the middle of the night. They traveled all night and by sunrise they were far away and safe" (*No Sugar* 4.2.90). This story is juxtaposed against the flight of Joe and Mary with their child to escape the tyranny of Mr. Neal at the end of the play.

Story telling is a form of cultural historiography and a potential mode of empowerment. The hybridised theatrical discourse produced by incorporating/preserving pre-contact traditions in/through a contemporary form, is used to comment on and critique contemporary society (Gilbert and Tompkins 131). This structural intervention in an otherwise realist text strengthens the counter-discursivity of the oral histories recounted. In its specific emphasis on story telling as a form of cultural retrieval, Davis's plays make clear that the official narrative of Australia's 'settlement' must learn to accommodate both the forms and the versions of history it has hitherto suppressed.

Firmly grounded in the mythos of the local community indigenous lore may be seen as a form of 'guerilla resistance' against cultural hegemony (133). Through the incorporation of storytelling in his plays Davis foregrounds history, not as a pre-ordained and completed truth, but rather as a continually (re)constructed fiction which can only ever be partial (in both senses of the word), provisional, and subject to change. It [story-telling] gives to his plays a certain cultural specificity and a corresponding tenor of resistance and the story-teller becomes a potential political agitator (Gilbert and Tompkins 137).

Time-span

With European colonisation, concepts of linear time and segmented space were applied to regions which had always calculated time and space differently (Gilbert and Tompkins 107). "History, as a

white invention, depends upon a view of time as an unfolding 'scroll', and proceeds sequentially, following the same kind of course as written words on a page. Because Aborigines have a different understanding of time, they do not recognize history as a distinct category. According to the anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner, there is no Aboriginal equivalent for the word 'time' (Arthur 59). The Aboriginal concept of temporality, like in many other cultures, is "centred on an acknowledgement of mythical time which occupies a discursive and spatial field characterized by timelessness". 'The Dreaming' for them connects the present with the past" (Arthur 58).

Quoting Frank Kermode's view that 'apocalyptic thought belongs to a rectilinear rather than cyclical view of the world' and that history, 'is purely intellectual discourse which abolishes Mythic time' (qtd. in Arthur 59), Kateryna Arthur explains the white tendency to eradicate Aboriginal culture by eliding it from White writing. According to her, the impulse towards closure that is built into European historical narrative supports the colonialist impulse to break traditional cyclical continuities (Arthur 59). By "questioning the simple correlation between history and time and by reconstructing empirical time as multi directional, elliptical, fragmented and even unpredictable" Jack Davis's plays "loosen imperialisms control over historical discourses" (Gilbert and Tompkins 142).

In *Kullark* a hundred and fifty years of historical time is presented in a few hours of stage time and this historical telescoping is accomplished by using the techniques of juxtaposition, elision, overlaying of different time frames; repetition of visual and aural images, staging of Dreaming events, incorporation of documents from the official historical records and other texts, and by characters stepping outside theatrical time to comment on the stage action (Gilbert and Tompkins 140). Various scenes set during different time periods are presented non-chronologically. Scenes depicting one day in the life of the contemporary *Nyoongah* family in the South West of Western Australia in 1979, the date of the first production of the play, are interspersed with scenes depicting and epic progression of events through different phases of Aboriginal history from 1827 to the 1940s. This includes dreaming events, the period of early contact, settlement, Aboriginal resistance, genocide, institutionalisation and regeneration. Extracts from diaries, journals and letters, transcripts of meetings and lectures, and oral stories encoding the different refractions and interpretations of events show that “each telling is incomplete in itself, [and hence] refers outward to an unstated totalising version” (Hodge and Mishra 105), a quality common to Aboriginal texts. Davis makes use of documentary material from the official historical record, amassed by whites, controlled by whites, and housed in predominantly white institutions. But, by presenting imperial versions of this monologic history in a wider context

of the Nyoongah past he conveys its historical, mythological and political meaning for Aborigines (Gilbert and Tompkins 140).

The story of *Kullark*, unfolds through the experiences of three Aboriginal families, Mitjitjiroo, his wife Moyrahn and their son Yagan, who are members of the Swan River people of the 1830s; Thomas, Mary and Alec Yorlah of the 1930s and Alec, Rosie and Jamie Yorlah of 1979. Through these families, Davis traces a continuum of Aboriginal resistance, emphasises the survival of the *Nyoongah* people against all odds and stresses the role of the black Australian family as the focus of Aboriginality. In the original Perth production, the same actors played the corresponding members of the family group, reinforcing the continuities across time. Yagan's struggle is shown to continue in Thomas Yorlah's resistance to institutionalization and his attempts to get his family out of the concentration camp called Moore River Native Settlement in the 1930's. Their son young Alec Yorlah, on his return from service in World War II, struggles to live with dignity but is forced into passivity and compromise and Jamie's landrights activism and struggle against racism in 1979 is shown to be a continuation of Yagan's resistance.

The Dreamers opens at dawn, with the distant echoing voices of children singing a tribal song. A tribal family is shown walking slowly across the escarpment, the men leading carrying weapons and the women and children following with bags, kulumans and firesticks. This

is followed by a scene depicting the contemporary Nyoongah family. At the end of act one, Worru, the elder of the family is presented alone on the stage lamenting the loss of the tribes.

WORRU. [. . .]

You have turned our land into a desolate place.

We stumble along with a half white mind.

Where are we?

What are we?

Not a recognised race.

There is a desert ahead and a desert behind. (1.9.45-46).

His lamentation is intercepted by the "soft distant sound of children singing a tribal song" followed by the tribal family "walking slowly back across the escarpment" (46), this time against a night sky. They are in chains. Invasion of indigenous spaces by the colonisers led to the removal of Aborigines from their traditional homelands and to their confinement on Missions and Reserves [concentration camps?]. Dispossessed of their land and relegated to marginal spaces they often ended up in goal. Worru continues:

WORRU. [. . .] We are tired of the benches,

Our beds in the park;

We welcome the sundown

That heralds the dark.

White lady methyrate

Keep us warm and from crying,
Hold back the hate
And hasten the dying. (1.9.46)

The tribal family once again appears on the escarpment in act two scene one. The kitchen/living room is shabby and untidy, with dirty dishes piled up on the sink and rubbish, bottles, and cigarette packets littered on the floor. With an eerie traditional chant they "trudge across the escarpment against a bleak wintry sky, . . . "inadequately dressed in blankets and shabby period clothes". It is the women who lead "carrying an assortment of boxes and bundles" (47) and Worru is shown lying on the bed in his squalid room moaning and mumbling a mournful litany, half English, half *Nyoongah*. A continuity is established between the Aborigines of the past and the contemporary Wallitch family through Worru and the tribal family and the framing of the lounge room setting with the backdrop of the escarpment on which the tribal family appear show the coexistence of the Dreamtime realm with with contemporary experience (H Gilbert 62). In the intermittant dream sequences Worru communicates with characters from other times and places.

The Dancer, not otherwise a character in the play, symbolically represents mythic figures and scenes from Worru's past. Unlike the tribal family he is not confined to the escarpment but inhabits all the acting spaces. He is an alter ego figure for Worru. In act one, scene four, Worru,

encouraged by Eli "begins a drunken stumbling version of a half-remembered tribal dance" (21), but when his feet tangle and he falls, an intricately painted dancer takes over. Accompanied by the sound of didgeridoo and clapsticks, he appears on the escarpment, "dances down and across in front" of the drunken group, "pounding his feet into the stage" (21), until finally dancing back up the ramp, he poses there for a moment, and the scene comes to an end. The Dancer, used here in a transformative role, signifies Aboriginal spiritual identity, which is linked both to the tribal past and the Dreamtime. According to Helen Gilbert, the two interrelated sets of movements, "produce an Aboriginal identity that reflects contemporary black reality, but which is, at the same time, also mythic, and therefore resistant to the dominant normalising impulses of that reality" (142). She also argues that the Dancer's pounding feet "remap, and reclaim stage space, recuperating, for Worru and the others, the tribal dance from a position of marginality within an urban culture" (70).

The imaginary form of Worru's dead friend Milbart is "given presence" (Gilbert 62) by the dancer. He appears when Worru in his dream urges Milbart to make a spear (1.6.35-36), and later a fire (2.1.58). In stylised rhythmic steps he "searches for a straight stick, finds it, straightens it, pares and tips it" and sprinting up the ramp onto the escarpment he strikes the *mirrolgah* stance [balancing the body in the act of throwing a spear] (1.6. 35-36). To make a fire he "searches for stone

flints, finds them, builds and ignites a fire. Carefully he lifts the fire in cupped hands and carries it to the escarpment where he blows it gently, igniting a careful fire, and sits warming himself". The latent spark of Aboriginality is lit and blown into a warm fire through contact with the Dreaming. And Shane learns through Worru and the Dreamer how to maintain contact with his Aboriginal heritage.

The Dancer appears as featherfoot, the harbinger of his own death, when Worru sings about it in Nyoongah. "Clapsticks followed by didgeridoo take up the rhythm" and "heavily decorated with leaves and carrying two short sticks he dances slowly across the stage and up on to the escarpment" (*The Dreamers* 2.2.69). Later when Worru is sick and falls off his bed he once again appears as featherfoot and moving slowly across in front of the rest of the characters but unseen to them, removes the decorating leaves, leaving them strewn on the front of the stage (2.3.73).

In act one scene seven Eli settles down with Worru to an evening's drinking listening to the radio. The sound of the radio fades to reveal the dancer, sitting cross-legged on the escarpment against a deep night sky singing, accompanying himself with the clapsticks (*The Dreamers* 1.7.43). Once again, "sitting cross-legged on the escarpment against a night sky" he sings sorrowfully at Worru's death in act two scene five (2.5.77).

In *Barungin* the Dancer appears thrice. When Peter gets arrested in

Koolbardon, the Dancer goes across the stage (*Barungin* 2.6.56). Peter, who had taken Little Doll to compete in the swimming carnival held at Geraldton, was driving Peegun's car when, in connection with a riot in a country town, all the black fellas' cars were searched and a number of arrests were made. A lot of stolen stuff Peegun had stashed away for Mickey was found in the car and Peter was arrested. When Robert announces to the Wallitch family that "Peter was found dead in his cell just after midnight", the Dancer goes across the stage and onto the hill (*Barungin* 2.7.58); And when the reading of the autopsy report comes to an end the Dancer is seen playing the didgeridoo on the hill (*Barungin* 2.8.57). As Helen Gilbert points out, here the Dancer contextualises Peter's death within the broader history of Aboriginal experience since colonization (62).

Through the Dancer's actions Davis shows an intimate connection in Aboriginal culture, between a Dreamtime realm, the present and the land. Though referred to as "he" in the stage directions the Dancer is assigned no gender in the casts lists. In the predominantly realistic text this distinction from other characters in the play allows him to function as "an alienating device" in the Brechtian sense. By disrupting the narrative sequence he draws attention to the constructedness of dramatic representation (Gilbert 135). He also functions as a "mode of historicization of Aboriginal identity" (Gilbert 142).

According to Gilbert and Tompkins, the mythical figure of the Dancer evokes temporal circularity, “collapse present, past, and mythic time and foreground points of overlap and contact between the spiritual world and the more mundane time/space of the ‘ordinary’ action” (142). Moreover, their appearance, signals a ritualised moment which represents timelessness, -- a state of being outside the dominant society’s temporalities -- whereby a ceremonial catharsis of colonial oppression is made possible (142).

Davis used theatre’s capacity for simultaneous representation of different time frames to interrogate history as it has been officially documented. As in the case of the three families in *Kullark*, in the original production of *Barungin*, the characters of Peter and that of the Dancer are played by the same actor. Dual roles such as these spanning different times destabilise the sense of an unbroken historical record in much the same manner as story-tellers or narrators break the time frame of a play (Gilbert and Tompkins 144).

Throughout the play *Barungin*, slides showing Aboriginal people in chains, images sliding back through decades of oppression, were projected behind the contemporary action reminding the audience that black anger and outrage have their roots in a history of white violence, and that the Aboriginal family at the center of the play has been shaped by an inheritance of grief (Gillam, *Westerly* 128).

Use of costumes and sets of different eras draw attention to the dismantling of a uniform chronology (Gilbert and Tompkins 144). Yagan's body painting in *Kullark* "carries with it various unspoken authorities and can be read" (Gilbert and Tompkins 63). It is symbolic as well as functional and is specific to the context and culture. Spiritual and political in reference, reveals the site of culture and the significance and power outside the context of the play. It also asserts the continuation of traditional or indigenous ritualised religious practices despite the influence of Christian missionaries (Gilbert and Tompkins 63). Later in the play, Charles Fraser, appears as a well-dressed botanist carrying a shovel and butterfly net (*Kullark* 1.3.13), while Yagan, Mitjitjiroo and Moyarahn are clad in kangaroo skin capes. The men carry spears, the woman a wahna [digging stick (*Kullark* 1.3.13). It is Fraser's colourful coat and trousers that is offered to the Aborigines as something to which they might attach some value. Later in the play at the Moore River Settlement, we find that Thomas Yorlah is made to wear settlement clothing (*Kullark* 2.3.49) and Jamie first appears in *Kullark* with an overnight bag and a guitar case, liberally plastered with land rights stickers (*Kullark* 1.6.22). In *No Sugar*, Joe wears a yellow shirt and black pants and the dress he presents to Mary is a red one (4.8.104). In *Barungin* every one of the graveside gathering carries a wreath of red and yellow flowers with black taffeta and ribbon (2.9.59). Here Davis makes a political statement through his choice of colours. The Aboriginal flag,

which consists of a tri-coloured rectangle, is divided in half horizontally, with the upper half, black and the lower red, and a yellow circle at the centre. The black represents the Aboriginal people, the red the earth and the people's spiritual relationship to the land, the yellow, the sun, the giver of life. The flag, derived from the land rights campaign (Shoemaker, *Black Words* 121) and designed in 1971 by Harold Thomas, a Luritja man from Central Australia, was used as the symbol of the Tent Embassy in Canberra (*Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* 371).

Spatial Histories

The segmentation of space/land into political units with European determined borders does not take into account traditional Aboriginal boundaries (145). The linguistic economic and cultural domination of Aboriginal Australians by Europeans depended upon the conquest of Aboriginal land as it was the site from which they articulated their power over the indigenous people and hence the remapping of space becomes a central project for decolonisation (145). Indigenous peoples were written out of historical space by a map/history, which ignored their spatial epistemologies and wrote over their traditional place names (Gilbert and Tompkins 145).

Traditionally, pictographs, which symbolised whole stories "were used as a mnemonic device for bringing to the mind of the initiated various events in the stories of spirit beings whose actions were often re-

enacted, as well, in ritual dance” (qtd. in Elder 214). A painting in neo-traditional style of Warrgul, the Rainbow serpent, in the shape of a map of the Swan River, is used as a backdrop to represent the exterior in the play *Kullark*. It incorporates revolving screens in which changes in location could be indicated (*Kullark/The Dreamers* 6). They reveal a water colour of Swan River in 1827 when Fraser enters exploring (1.3.13), it shows the painting of a sailing ship on Swan River in 1829 in Act one scene three to represent the arrival of the settlers and later a painting of the Swan River colony in 1832. The second revolving screen through which Stirling enters periodically with proclamations, invariably reveals a Union Jack. The screen representing the interior reveals the contemporary kitchen-living room of the Yorlah family as well as a crude settlers hut of the 1830s in Act one Scene five. By foregrounding ‘the inevitable discrepancy between the “natural” and the “imitated” object the stylised serpent image holds the supposed mimeticism of the western map up to question (Gilbert and Tompkins 148).

Chesson describes the backdrop to the upstage setting in *The Dreamers*. Anchored in the present it depicted,

the creative spirit of Warrgul and traced the courses of the Swan and Avon rivers, bounded by the Darling Range, Rottnest Island, Garden Island and the Victoria Plains. The stages of Warrgul’s journey were recorded in a background that included the hollow basin of Perth Water, where he

rested to collect his strength before he etched his way into the sea at Fremantle. The islands were rock-markers to indicate his passing and welcome his return. Each yellow represented the sandplains north of Perth and a burning red the Darling Range and the Swan and Avon valleys. Abstract patterns were used to recall the beauty of the indigenous flora and fauna. Worked into the back drop were circles to represent Northam and Grass Valley, and a lacework of footprints traced the Northam Nyoongahs' journey to a larger circle representing Moore River (200).

In *Barungin* News paper headlines and images of Aboriginal people incarcerated, drawn from the archive and projected on to the screen is used as a backdrop and as a linking device.

In the plays of Jack Davis, space becomes a force that potentially *determines* relationships rather than simply affecting them (Gilbert and Tompkins 146). The positioning of settlers and/or indigenes within the landscape /stagescape illustrates this (146). By representing enclosures, boundaries and contested places in the stagespace, Davis illustrates how apartheid structures are built and maintained in the interests of imperialism and how they may be subverted or broken down (Gilbert 63).

In *Kullark* the settings are often overlaid so that there is no clear delineation between the spaces claimed by the Whites during the

invasion process and the spaces occupied by the Blacks in the contemporary narrative (61). In *No Sugar*, the Perth and Northam offices are literally and ideologically marginalized on the left, the Moore River Settlement and its offices on the right, with the black space -- the campfire -- central stage (Dibble 96). On Australia Day 1934, at the Moore River Native Settlement, all the whites are assembled on the dais facing the assembled black population of the settlement. Billy and Bluey "dressed in new but absurdly ill-fitting uniforms" (*No Sugar* 4.5.96) are placed between the two groups.

Helen Gilbert describes the setting of *In Our Town* for its premiere production in Perth in which "a diagonal line/path running from the back of the acting area to the limits of the thrust stage to mark a boundary between the predominantly white café-bar area and the black bush camp which occupied the rest of the set" (68). David through his presence in the café and Sue through her visit to the Aboriginal camp, transgress these barriers and sometimes the two also walk precariously along the boundary line (69).

The photograph in the published text of *In Our Town* shows Mrs. Moss (White) and Milly positioned on either side of the borderline as they discuss their children's relationship (Gilbert, *Jack Davis* 71). While the Moss family in *In Our Town*, are gathered close to the rostrum at the Anzac Day ceremony (1.1.1), the Millimurra family gather around their

campsite (*In Our Town* 1.1.1). Larry and Davis stand close, but separated towards their own families (*In Our Town* 1.1.1). When Sue expresses her wish to visit the Millimurra family Sam advises her to wait till they get off the reserve since 'Wetjalas aren't allowed on the reserve ... [and] could get three months ...[unless one is] a missionary or a department bloke" (*In Our Town* 1.9.23). But Helen Gilbert points out that Davis portrays the segregation and marginalisation of blacks in ways that dismantles the physical and ideological structures, which disempower the Aborigines (68).

While depicting the historical confinement of Aborigines within institutions like missions and gaols segregating them from white society, Davis stresses the importance of subversion and resistance. In his plays, boundaries dissolve to become, 'debatable places' that 'speak' through their violation. In *No sugar* the Aborigines repeatedly break out of the mission compound and refuse to respect other restrictive enclosures created by representatives of white authority.

By dramatising the 'dialectic of place and displacement' spatial histories presented in Davis's plays work against models of theatre which subordinate spatial signifiers to other thematic and generic concerns, and/or which present the landscape merely as a scenic device, designed at best to heighten narrative emplotment and, at worst, to recede as a naturalised backdrop for signal events. By revealing the land as an object of discursive and territorial contention, as well as an 'accumulative text'

that records multiple inscriptions Davis dismantles the myth of *terra nullius* (Gilbert and Tompkins 156).

Language

As Gilbert and Tompkins point out the authority commanded by the English language was much the same as the authority of literate, official history over the unwritten, changeable Aboriginal histories (165). With colonization, the use of indigenous languages was prohibited, and the English language was imposed on the Aboriginal people (164). This turned out to be the first step towards the destruction of Aboriginal culture. The loss of language led to a loss of names, of oral history, of a connection to the land and the speaker's sense of autonomy and dignity (164). Granny Doll, a character in Jack Davis's play, *Barungin (Smell the Wind)* (1988), mourns: "Wetjalas (whites) killed our language" (*Barungin* 1.7.36).

Children who were taken away from their parents and brought up in missions and settlements were forbidden from speaking their own languages and were severely punished if they disobeyed and adults in settlements were also prevented from indulging in their own culture. Uncle Herbie complains in *In Our Town* "When I was a child, they say don't you talk blackfella way, that's bad, devil will get you and they wouldn't let us corroboree wouldn't let us sing and talk in our language" (*In Our Town* 1.5.12). Due to these early policies "most Aboriginal people regard English as their first language" (Davis, *Writers in Action* 191).

By renaming people and places in English, constructions of location and identity were replaced and greater control established over both. The Stolen Generation had been given English names and some had their names changed during the war. By renouncing her English name to protest the Bicentennial celebrations of 1988 Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal) said "They could not spell the Aboriginal names so they gave us English ones" (qtd. in Shoemaker 225). Gran in *Barungin* describes how some of the Wallitch family became Wallets. "When old Grandfather Dave went to the War, then army fellas couldn't say 'Wallitch', so they changed it to 'Wallet'". Similarly, in *In Our Town*, when David Millimurra went to war his name is changed to David Miller. As Larry says, though his name is Millimurra, "a nig name" (1.6.14) the records wrote him down as David Miller since it was easier to pronounce, says Larry (*In Our Town* 1.5.14). However, in spite of all attempts at suppression, the Aboriginal languages survived.

Forms of postcolonial language called 'antilanguage' by Hodge and Mishra, which arises as a strategy of abrogation, are according to Michael Halliday (1978) specially constructed to sustain difference and identity. Opaque to outsiders, it encodes the ideology of the group and foregrounds the world that sustains their identity. The intense attachment of Aboriginal communities to their traditional languages, according to Hodge and Mishra, is an antilanguage strategy, excluding outsiders (White Australians, and even other Aboriginal groups) and

bonding the community (206). Clothing codes, behavioural patterns etc. also reinforce the construction of group identity through forms of speech. The Aboriginal language used in Davis's plays is the Nyoongah language, occasionally called the *Bibbulmun*. Davis explains that the term 'Nyoongah' literally means 'man' (an adult male; *York* or *Yorga* being the female equivalent) and that it has become a general term denoting Aboriginality in the South-West of Western Australia. According to him *Bibbulmun* is one of the fourteen South-West languages that have combined over the years to create the modern *Nyoongah* spoken in the play. It was at Moore River Native Settlement that Davis first began writing down Aboriginal words and learning the Bibbulmun language. He had also worked on a grammar of the language for a number of years. In *The Dreamers* Worru mentions some of the Nyoongah words:

Worru [. . .] [*Pointing to his beard*] Do you know what this is, *Nyoongah* way? This is my *gnarnuk*. [*Pointing to his nose.*] This my *moorly*. [*Pointing to his eye.*] And this my *meow*. [*Indicating his forehead.*] And this my *yimmung*. [*Cackling with delight.*] Plenty *nyoondiak* there, *kia*, plenty *nyoondiak*. (*The Dreamers* 1.6.32). leaf on a tree, as well as tea leaf is *mahngk* (1.7.40). The only *Nyoongah* word Shane knows in *Wetjala*. (1.6.33).

As Gilbert and Tompkins point out, the imperial theatre had assisted in the inculcation of the coloniser's language both through the

training of actors and the conditioning of audiences (165). Now Davis uses the theatre to articulate linguistic resistance to imperialism. The presentation on stage, of the Nyoongah language, which had been forbidden by the colonisers, “represent[s] an act of defiance and an attempt to retrieve cultural autonomy” (Gilbert and Tompkins 169). By emphasizing not only the sound and rhythm of the language and its accompanying paralinguistic features, but also the site from which it is spoken (167) Davis’s plays help to reinvest Aboriginal systems of communication with a sense of power and an active place on the stage (168). The hegemonic ‘norm is thus modified, subverted, or decentred (Gilbert and Tompkins 170). The careful redeployment of linguistic signifiers – such as tone, rhythm, register, and lexicon – generate as much political resistance as the rewriting of history (Gilbert and Tompkins 168).

The performance of the plays emphasize spoken rather than written discourse and thus foregrounds orality while the use of un glossed Nyoongah language establishes a gap between (white) viewers and (native) performers which disproves notions of the infinite transmissability of language (170). Nyoongah words left untranslated, reverses the normal linguistic power structures, valorises the Nyoogah language and privileges the Aboriginal audience over the dominant English-speakers (171). It also demonstrates to the whites the enormous impact of being forced to learn and speak a vastly different language

(Tompkins, *Jack Davis* 52). Even when the meaning of the words are provided in English (in the programme notes or in the published versions of the plays) in order to make them accessible to non-speakers, it still doesn't provide all levels of meaning (Gilbert and Tompkins 172).

According to Bruce McGuinness and Denis Walker, Aboriginal writers "adopt various styles of writing so that what they really want to write about is there. It's hidden. It's contained within their writing, if one can see through the subterfuge, the camouflage that they use when they're writing" (Davis and Hodge 47). Aboriginality is displaced and concealed from the eyes of outsiders. Hodge and Mishra see this strategy as a continuation of the way in which traditional Aborigines guarded ritual secrets from the uninitiated (206).

In *Kullark the Dancer*, sitting cross-legged on the escarpment against a night sky, sings sorrowfully at Worru's death in act two scene five.

DANCER. *Nitja Wetjula, warrah, warrah!*

Gnullarah dumbart noychwa.

Noychwa, noychwa, hoychwa.

Wetjala kie-e-ny gnullarah dumbart.

Kie-e-ny, kie-e-ny, kie-e-ny,

Kie-e-ny.

[The White man is evil, evil!

My people are dead.

Dead, dead, dead.

The white man kill my people.

Kill, kill, kill,

Kill.] (2.5.77)

Hodge and Mishra points out that in the glossary at the back, the meaning of the word *gnullarah* is given as 'ours' not 'mine' as in the translation. By using the exclusive form of 'we' those with the required reading skill (a knowledge of the nuances of the language) are separated from the non-Nyoongah speakers in the audience and incorporated into a community with the Dancer. The Non-nyoongah speaking audience is thus constructed as the 'Other' (208). Anti language is used to express their sense of otherness not only from the rest of the Australian community but from other Aboriginal communities as well (Hodge and Mishra 211).

Aboriginal culture possessed a set of qualities that are distinctively oral; namely absence of closure, generic fluidity, the dimension of performance, and a specific attitude to the potency of the spoken word (75). As Bruce Shaw has pointed out many of these are also features of 'Aboriginal English': "non-verbal and semi-verbal markers, repetition, reversals, standard substantives, a vocabulary of special terms, scatology, dialogue, interrogatives, verbal punctuation, mythological allusions, onomatopoeia, similes and the maintenance of suspense' (qtd. in Hodge and Mishra 75). Hodge and Mishra describes Aboriginal English

as “a sensitive medium of artistic expression, which Aborigines have developed into a rich continuum of forms that they already use with great facility and precision in the task of mediation (80). Aboriginal English [. . .] is a complex language with its own grammatical patterns; it has its own cultural codes, semantic levels and subversive strategies that a non-Aboriginal listener or reader might fail to comprehend correctly (Nelson, *Connections* 7)

In *The Tempest*, Caliban says: “You taught me language and my profit on’t / is, I know how to curse” (1.2.). Apart from using Nyoongah word Davis also re-presents English. The use of variant Englishes offers one effective means of refusing to uphold the privilege of the imperial language (Gilbert and Tompkins 176). When a language is indigenised, its lexicon changes to accommodate new words and/or new combinations of words, which can be staged as part of a culturally inflected dialogue (178).

In Davis’s plays, the term ‘*wetjala*’ (singular and plural), used by the Nyoongah characters to refer to whites, is not an Aboriginal word as such but a new term created from the English. The terms ‘white’ and ‘fellow’ (usually pronounced ‘fella’ in Australia) had merged to give a different pronunciation, a different spelling and a shift in the meaning of the original words, since *wetjala* usually carries a mildly derogatory connotation (Gilbert and Tompkins 178). Such changes in the lexicon illustrate the colonised subjects’ ability to appropriate the language of

the imperial centre and use it for their own expressive purposes. It also establishes a group identity (178).

By incorporating aspects of the oral tradition into the dramatic text and through parodying received discursive codes Davis destabilises 'English' and subvert its authority (181). The opening of Davis's *Barungin* depicts a fundamentalist preacher burying Eli. Through the incomprehension, discomfort, and annoyance displayed by the mourners, at the exaggerated and repetitive rhetoric of the preacher, Davis points to its inappropriateness to the occasion and thus destabilises the inflated English rhetoric and dominant society's discourse (182). Moreover Peegun through his imitation of the preacher, critiques the coloniser's religious discourse by offering an ironic version that deflates the assumptions of privilege encoded by such language (181).

While Davis uses the English language to express his dramatic art he also makes use of 'abrogation and appropriation, the cultural strategies of postcolonialism (205). Davis observes that, "because we [Aborigines] represent only one percent of the population [. . .] if we're going to survive, we have to learn to speak English as well as Aboriginal" (Davis, *Writers in Action* 188).

[. . .] if I wrote in an Aboriginal language none of you people would buy my book because you wouldn't be able to read it; therefore I wouldn't have any bread and butter. But also

English is my first language. My Aboriginal language is my second language. Throughout urban Australia we mostly speak English. Very few speak Aboriginal (Davis *Writers in Action* 191).

Song and Music

Songs by itself is an 'alternative' discourse and cultural signifier (184) and are effectively used by Davis. Apart from conveying an idea or emotion, song and music generate cultural meanings in its own right through a signification based on pitch, accent, tune, musical arrangement, the kinesics and proxemics of the singer and the historical layers of meaning of the lyrics (Gilbert and Tompkins 193-94).

Tindale had divided traditional Aboriginal songs into eight types: "Dream songs or *begere*, relating the adventures of ancestral beings; magical songs; songs associated with sickness and death; totemic songs; hunting songs; dramatic songs and epics; fighting songs; and those dealing with 'public opinion' " (qtd. in Berndt 369). According to him Aboriginal myths were mainly presented through song and not as prose narrative. These sacred songs were usually sung in a special setting: on the men's dancing ground, or in association with ritual sequences. The audience (members of the community) gathered around the space cleared for dancing and sat down on the ground. The songs usually sung to the accompaniment of clapsticks and didgeridoo were potentially associated

with action sequences of some kind; sacred songs often having their corresponding rites, or stipulated actions or movements. According to them, song and dance are ideally inseparable (Berndt 371).

The sacred songs provided only “key words or references, and not full descriptions” (Berndt 242). “There is a heavy use of symbolism; a single word may convey a whole range of images – most notably in short compressed songs where each word has a number of mythical and other implications apart from its literal meanings” (372). Berndt points out that, Strehlow, analysing the construction of the songs of Aranda has shown how different word forms convey subtle distinctions in meaning (372). For each creature or thing there is a series of names, with slightly different meanings. In addition there are ‘outside ‘ and ‘inside” words, singing words, invocations, “big” names and “small” names, and so on.

The songs are sometimes organised in cycles, the sequences carefully arranged and apparent digressions interwoven into the central theme with specific allusions, local and mythical, amplifying their main points. The story, which unfolds in a leisurely way, with much attention to local detail rather than to plot, normally includes a number of place and other names, which also have meanings, not easily translatable (374). There are songs for all occasion and their subject matter is as varied as life itself.

With the policy of assimilation, religious practices centered on

exposed bora circles were forbidden. Though secular songmaking and singing continued in the camps, but with the arrival of the missionaries and their work of education, these were soon replaced by hymns and the song forms of England. With increased Aboriginal involvement in the cattle industry and the widespread use of the wireless, when new melodies in foreign languages began to be heard, English words replaced Indigenous words and traditional single song stanza came to be modified with a second stanza (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 109). American country songs and the western musical became popular throughout rural Australia. The traveling singers introduced the guitar into Aboriginal communities (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 110). Most indigenous secular song structures, were soon replaced by Country and western (hillbilly) songs since the subject matter reflected the new Indigenous lifestyles: “horses and cattle, drinking, gambling, the outrider as hero, a nomadic existence, country-orientation, wronged love, fighting and fucking” (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 111). “My Brownskinned Baby” created in this genre by Bob Randall is written to protest the forced removal of children from their parents and has been incorporated into *Kullark* by Jack Davis. After the second world war, in the urban situation, American popular song structures, like rock’ n’ roll, were constantly played over the radio and television and influenced indigenous songs. In the late seventies, alternative music stations played reggae from the Caribbean. Its lyrics which stressed an ideology of

blackness and a sense of belonging to a land, appealed to the Indigenous people who had entered a phase of political activism (Mudrooroo *Indigenous Literature* 111-12).

In his discussion of Indigenous songs Mudrooroo uses the concept of ideotones: “audio-narrative units which appear to flow from and to suggest certain inevitable conjunctions occurring in the word/music nexus. These ideotones may be seen either to affirm or to challenge the apparent unity of the dominant ideological discourses playing at any one time. [. . .]. Those in the know, or in the culture, received a different meaning from those in the general population” (*Indigenous Literature* 113-114).

Song and music form an integral part of the plays of Jack Davis. It contributes to the *mise-en-scene* and affects the mood or atmosphere of the play. In *Kullark*, music serves the function of representing different cultures and shows switches in time periods. The life of the contemporary couple unfolds as a local commercial radio station plays country and western music. While the British explorers enter to a rollicking tune, the Irish settlers are represented by folk ballads, folk dance tunes and tin whistles, sometimes jaunty, sometimes gentle and on one occasion with a martial beat. Stirling’s official proclamations are always announced by a drumroll. Apart from this songs are also used.

Didgeridoo, an Aboriginal musical instrument half way between a

horn and a trumpet, and supposed to have been evolved from an 'emu decoy' (a short hollow branch blown to lure birds, such as emus and bush turkeys by imitating their calls (*Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* 280) is used as a marker of Aboriginality. In Act One Scene two of *Kullark*, Yagan's chant and dance are accompanied by the drone of the didgeridoo. It is used along with clapsticks whenever the Aboriginal family appears on the stage. Heavy rhythmic didgeridoo and clapsticks announces the entrance of the Dancer (*The Dreamers* 1.4.21). It sometimes crashes in (*The Dreamers* 1.6.35; 2.1.58), takes up the rhythm of singing (2.2.69), or drones threateningly (*The Dreamers* 2.3.73). In *Barungin* a didgeridoo sounds as a dancer goes across the stage (2.6.56) and on Peter's death the Dancer plays the didgeridoo on the hill (2.8.59). During the funeral service the preacher's voice is drowned out by a didgeridoo (*Barungin* 1.1.7) and it is often used for family entertainment (*Barungin* 2.3.44). In the busking scene in *Barungin*, while Peegun plays a didgeridoo Shane accompanies him on a guitar (*Barungin* 1.3.15). Clapsticks accompanies the didgeridoos for dancing (*No Sugar* 2.6.65). In *No Sugar* Jimmy plays 'Springtime in the Rockies' (*No Sugar* 1.3.27, 33) and 'Home Sweet Home' (*No Sugar* 1.4.31) on his mouth organ.

Sounds of the Magpies indicates the presence the Nyoongahs. Its warbling shows the presence of children in *The Dreamers* (1.2.8), and Mary's pregnancy in *No Sugar* (2.10.74; 4.10.109). Later it squawks to

warn Joe and Mary of the approach of Bluey, the black tracker (2.10.74). The sound of the occasional crow (*The Dreamers* 1.5.22, 1.6.26), cicadas droning at dusk (*The Dreamers* 1.6.36) and the sounds of dogs barking (*No Sugar* 2.3.59) can also be heard from a Nyoongah camp.

In *The Dreamers* Eli sings the hymns 'Onward Christian soldiers' (2.2.58) and 'Yes Jesus loves me' (2.2.59) as drunken songs. Peegun in *Barungin* sings the parody of a hymn as a drinking song (*Barungin* 2.3.47) and in jail Jimmy sings "Hail Queen of Heaven" (1.4.32).

With Sister Eileen the children practice the hymn "There is a happy land" (*No Sugar* 4.2.91).

There is a happy land,
Far, far away,
Where saints in glory stand,
Bright, bright as day:
Oh, how they sweetly sing,
'Worthy is our Saviour King!'
Loud, let His praises ring,
Praise, praise for aye! (*No Sugar* 4.2.91).

But on Australia day celebrations it is sung as a parody (*No Sugar* 4.5.98).

There is a happy land,
Far, far away.

No sugar is our tea,
Bread and butter we never see.
That's why we're gradually
Fading away. (*No Sugar* 4.5.98).

The Anzac Day ceremony in the play *In Our Town*, ends with the hymn "Lest We Forget" (1.1.2), and Uncle Herbie in a later scene remembers the hymn "Jesus he liked the diddle chillun" he was taught at the mission (*In Our Town* 1.5.12).

'God Save the King' is sung to close the Australia Day celebrations in *No Sugar* (4.5.99), 'Rule Britannia' plays softly as the English scientist enters with the box containing Yagan's head (*Kullark* 1.7.33). 'Advance Australia Fair' plays loudly (*Kullark* 2.1.41) when the actors enter to take stock of the situation in 1901. The song 'Brown Skin Baby' with words and music by Bob Randall, is adapted by Jack Davis (*Kullark* 2.1.42-43) to speak of the Stolen Generation. In 1945 the victorious Australian Army returning home from World war two (*Kullark* 2.5.57) is greeted with 'Pack up your troubles and smile' and Vera Lynn sings 'Wish me luck' as ex-corporal Alec number two four seven five four three steps out into the world as a civilian (*Kullark* 2.5.60). In *In our Town*, Drunk on champagne, the returned soldiers Larry and David sing 'Lily Marlene' (1.2.3).

The Dreamers opens with the distant echoing voices of children singing a tribal song (*The Dreamers* 1.1.7) as the tribal family slowly walks across the escarpment going hunting and gathering. The chanting is soft and distant as they walk back in chains (*The Dreamers* 1.9.46), and eerie (*The Dreamers* 2.1.47) as they later trudge along, inadequately dressed in blankets and shabby clothes, in winter. Apart from these tribal songs in *The Dreamers* (1.1.7, 1.9.46, 2.1.47), songs in Nyoongah are sung by the Dancer (*The Dreamers* 1.7.43, 2.5.77), Worru (*The Dreamers* 2.2.69), Gran (*No Sugar* 4.10.109) and Herbie (*In Our Town* 1.11.26).

Poem by Worru (*The Dreamers* 1.1.7-8), and in (1.9.45-46), blends with the sounds of a tribal song in *The Dreamers* (1.9.46) and the play ends with a poem by Dolly (*The Dreamers* 2.7.78-79). The poem 'Nostalgia' in the opening scene and 'Worru' in the last scene were written fifteen years before the play itself and was later woven into it. In his collection of poetry the *First born* Jack included the poem about Worru. *In Our Town* features the poems by David, "the poet laureate of the 32nd battlion" (1.6.15) about their mate Sam the gambling man (1.2.4), and about Norm and the two- up game (1.6.15).

In *Barungin* "The Magpie Song" (*Barungin* 1.3.16) which begins by telling the story of a bird ends with a pointed cry for landrights:

You believe in land rights too.

You believe in land rights too.

Do you believe in land rights too?.

And at the end of the play Shane reads the poem 'John Pat' (*Barungin* 2.9.60)

The Radio is an integral part of the contemporary scene. In *The Dreamers* Peter turns the radio on (1.4.21) and dances a disco dance, Dolly turns it on to "the Earl Reeve 6WF Tuesday night Country Music Request Programme with Jimmy Little singing "Baby Blue' (*The Dreamers* 1.7.40) As the family sits listening to Dolly's request "Me and Bobby McGee' (*The Dreamers* 1.7.42) the sound of the radio fades to the sound of the clapsticks to reveal the dancer sitting crosslegged, singing in Nyoongah accompanying himself with clapsticks (*The Dreamers* 1.7.43). Radio plays gentle country and western softly in *Barungin* (1.4.16, 19) as Meena and Granny Doll clear away the dishes at night and Little Doll plays *Trivial Pursuit*. The walkman and the TV are also part of the contemporary scene (*Barungin* 1.2.11).

The presence of song and music in an otherwise non-musical play, denaturalizes the action, increases the audiences' attention, diverting it from one discourse to another (Gilbert and Tompkins 194). The numerous voices of a chorus multiplies the effect and provides an occasion for a vocal expression of solidarity, resistance, and indigenous presence (Gilbert and Tompkins 194). Indigenous song and music used

in the plays recall pre-contact methods of communication, affirm the continued validity of oral traditions, and help to break the bonds of conventional (western) representation (Gilbert and Tompkins 194), whereas hybrid song/music function to protest the domination of the coloniser's linguistic/musical tradition by liberally interspersing it with the words, forms, or musical structures of their less recognised and validated system of communication (Gilbert and Tompkins 194). Song and music can also live on after the performance's conclusion when the audience retells or re-sings parts of the theatrical presentation as an act of memory and thus act as a mnemonic device and as powerful 'linguistic' signifiers (Gilbert and Tompkins 194).

Whether they articulate their concerns through verbal or musical forms, or through silence, post-colonial plays reinforce language's heavy inflection with, and investment in, cultural specificity (Gilbert and Tompkins 200).

Dancing

In Aboriginal Australia, songs and the capacity to dance were venerated as sources of power and social prestige. They were incorporated in rituals and transcended everyday life concerns, since they were considered to have been transmitted from Creator Beings, who are tied to particular geographical sites and localities. Original forms of dances have been used as a means of substantiating claims to land

(*Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* 220). Danced performances were not only representations of events with dancers assuming roles, but affirmations of their inner identity. As participatory acts, which brought dancers, spirits and various Dreamings into living juxtaposition with one another, dances closed space/time gaps between past and present for those who owned them (*Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* 256). Knowledge of the directions of the ancestral tracks in relation to land and Dreamings are considered crucial to understanding the dances. Sets of painted body signs indicated social distinctions, and specific gestures designated kinship and/or totemic relations.

In *The Dreamers* Worru dances a “drunken stumbling version of a half -remembered traditional dance” and when he stumbles and falls an intricately painted Dancer takes over and “dances down and across in front of them, pounding his feet into the stage” (1.4.21). Later the dancer appears as Milbart to make a spear and “in stylized rhythmic steps [he] searches for a straight stick, finds it, straightens it, pares and tips it before sprinting up the ramp onto the escarpment and striking the mirrolagh stance” (*The Dreamers* 1.6.35-36). To make a fire “in stylized rhythmic steps [he] searches for stone flints, finds them, builds and ignites a fire. Carefully he lifts the fire in cupped hands and carries it to the escarpment where he blows it gently, igniting a careful fire, and sits warming himself” (*The Dreamers* 2.1.58). Carrying two short sticks and heavily decorated with leaves the dancer, appears as feather foot at the

front of stage and dances slowly across the stage and up on to the escarpment, (*The Dreamers* 2.2.69) but in the next scene when Worru falls off his bed, the dancer appears again as feather foot “and moves slowly across in front . . . removing the decorating leaves and leaving them strewn on the front of the stage” (*The Dreamers* 2.3.73). The dancer also appears thrice in *Barungin*, where he goes across the stage (2.6.56), on to the hill (*Barungin* 2.7.58) and appears on the hill playing the didgeridoo (*Barungin* 2.8.59).

Worru remembers the various Aboriginal dances like “the *yongarah* dance, the *waitj* dance, the *karda*, the *yahllarah*, the *middar*, the *nyumby*, . . .” and laments that “they all finish now, all gone”. (*The Dreamers* 1.6.34).

Uncle Herbie, in *In our Town*, insists that he is “a young fella” because he. “can still do a middar and . . . can still play the didgeridoo” (*In Our Town* 1.7.17). After performing a rain dance (*In Our Town* 1.7.17) Herbie claims: “You see big Yungu rain come next week” (*In Our Town* 1.7.17). While Peter drunkenly dances his own disco to the music on the radio in *The Dreamers* (1.4.21), Micky dances to the music on a tape in *Barungin* (2.2.41) and Drunk, Peegun dances around singing the parody of a hymn (*Barungin* 2.2.47).

In Act two scene six of *No Sugar* a corroboree is held at night around a campfire made in a clearing in the pine plantation of the Moore River Native Settlement. Jimmy, Sam, and the black trackers Billy and

Bluey paint themselves with *wilgi*. Accompanied by clapsticks Jimmy sings his grandfather's song in the *Nyoongah* language and miming with his hands, explains its meaning. It is "for the *karra*, . . . , crabs to come up the river and for the fish to jump up high so he can catch them in the fish traps" (*No Sugar* 2.6.66). Billy, who belonged to another territory, explains his body painting and performs a dance, which came from the *Wanmulla* country.

BILLY. This one *bungarra*, an' he lookin' for berry bush. But he know that fella eagle watchin' him and he know that fella is cunnin' fella. He watchin' and lookin' for that eagle, that way, this way, that way, this way.

[He rolls over a log, disappearing almost magically. Bluey plays the didgeridoo and Billy appears some distance away by turning quickly so the firelight reveals his painted body. He dances around, then seems to disappear suddenly. He rolls back over the log and drops down, seated by the fire.]
(2.6.66)

He later joins the *Nyoongahs* Sam, Jimmy, and Joe in a dance "with increasing speed and energy, stamping their feet, whirling in front of the fire, their bodies appearing and disappearing as the paint catches the firelight. The dance becomes faster and more frantic until finally Sam lets out a yell and they collapse, dropping back to their positions around the fire" (*No Sugar* 2.6.66). Billy acknowledges Jimmy as a "songman" and

the Nyoongahs as “dancemen” and affirms: “This still your country. [Flinging his arms wide] . . . *Gudeeah* make ‘em fences, windmill, make ‘em road for motor car, big house, cut ‘em down trees. Still your country! (*No Sugar* 2.6.67). He goes on to describe the Oombulgarri massacre, which finished his mob in 1926.

The participation of the trackers in the corroboree indicates their preference for maintaining their traditional lifestyles (Tompkins, *Jack Davis* 59) and Davis remembers that in the last Nyoongah corroboree held in Fremantle black trackers from the central police station were involved, including Billy Kimberly, Old Nipper and Sammy Broome Hall (Chesson 61).

Peggy Summers, a twelve year old White girl, who is working on a new dance for her scholarship assessment thinks of using Aboriginal music with didgeridoo and clapsticks for her piece. When invited to her house Tim Winalli, an Aboriginal boy of thirteen, does a short emu dance and William, his cousin, a bungarra (old man goanna) dance and Peggy identifies the animals represented (40). Mother tells her the story of the old man bungarra as William dances the bungarra.

This is the story of the old man bungarra.

And he’s walking along in the desert, looking for that special berry bush that he can eat. And he’s walking along and walking along. And up in the sky, way, way up, there’s this eagle, just waiting to get the old man bungarra. And the

eagle's up there hovering, just waiting. And the bungarra's walking along and he's walking along, and he's looking at the eagle and he's looking for the berry bush, and he's looking at the eagle and he's looking for the berry bush. Then the eagle sees him, and he dives down fast! And the bungarra looks up, and he runs off quick!

[The dance ends] (41)

Later, the boys together do the kangaroo hunt while mother plays the clapsticks (42). "Tim, as the hunter, mimes spearing the kangaroo, played by William" (42). Peggy plans a dance with "two swans, a black swan and a white swan, . . . swimming along a lake" (51). She demonstrates it using ballet steps calling out the French terms for each movement. In his efforts to repeat it Tim ends up parodying the ballet movements. He demonstrates the same dance corroboree style, in which "The swan isn't swimming, he's walking along the bank looking for worms. He's got a long neck, and a bushy tail and he waddles like a duck, only slow" (53). While it has to be done with a long neck, knees in, and her kwon (back) sticking out (53-54), Peggy's attempts to repeat it turns out to be too graceful and thus fails. The end result is a great success -- Peggy in a leotard and Tim with his body painted perform a modern dance incorporating elements of classical and traditional aboriginal dance, with music of didgeridoo and clapsticks (70).

As a form of spatial inscription, dance functions as a productive way of illustrating -- and countering -- the territorial aspects of Western imperialism. It's patterned movement offers the opportunity to establish cultural context and to challenge the norms of the colonizer. By centralising traditional, non-verbal forms of self-representation, dance recuperates post-colonial subjectivity. Situated within a dramatic text, it disrupts the narrative sequence and/or genre, denaturalises theatre's signifying practices and thus draws attention to the constructedness of all dramatic representation, and functions as an alienating device in the Brechtian sense (Gilbert and Tompkins 239).

Since the imposition of an alien language had compromised the Aboriginal attempts to articulate themselves verbally, dance functions as a mode of empowerment by encoding identity through movement. Davis's plays make use of the communicative power and subversive potential of dance. But since the traditional styles of movement are often hybridised with western form and fashion, the dance presented to the audience is less a reified 'traditional' art than a staged artistic process and thus express a multifaceted identity which takes account of tradition while refusing to be locked under the sign of 'authenticity' (Gilbert and Tompkins 240).

Interpreting dance as a text in itself -- and as part of a play's overall semiotics -- provides an approach to drama that denaturalises notions of subjectivity as grounded primarily in dialogue. Dance thus

emerges as a locus of struggle in producing and representing individual and cultural identity. As a site of competing ideologies, dance also offers potential liberation from imperialist representation through the construction of an active, moving body that 'speaks' its own forms of corporality. (Gilbert and Tompkins 242).

WORKS CITED

- Arthur, Kateryna. "Fiction and the Rewriting of History: A Reading of Colin Johnson." *Westerly* 1 Mar. (1985): 55-60.
- Berndt, Ronald M. and Catherine H. *The World of the First Australians: Aboriginal Traditional life: Past and Present*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1996.
- Chesson, Keith. *Jack Davis: A Life Story*. Melbourne: Dent, 1988.
- Davis, Jack. "Barungin (Smell the Wind)." *Writers in Action: The Writer's Choice Evenings*. Ed. by Gerry Turcotte, Sydney: Currency Press, 1990. 179-202.
- . *Barungin (Smell the Wind)*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1989.
- . *The Dreamers*. 1982. Sydney: Currency Press, 1996.
- . *In Our Town*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1992
- . *Kullark/The Dreamers*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1982.
- . *No Sugar*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1986.
- Elder, Arlene A. "Self, Other and Post-Historical Identity in Three Plays by Jack Davis." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 25 (1990): 204-15.
- Gilbert, Helen and Joanne Tompkins. *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Gilbert, Helen. "'Talking Country': Place and Displacement in Jack Davis's Theatre." *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994. 60-71

- Gilliam, Cliff. "Hesperian Varieties: New Western Australia Drama at the 1988 Festival of Perth." *Westerly* 2 June 1988 : 127-134
- Hodge, Bob and Vijay C. Mishra. *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991.
- McGuinness, Bruce and Denis Walker. "The Politics of Aboriginal Literature." *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985. 43-54.
- Mudrooroo. *Indigenous Literature of Australia: Milli Milli Wangka*. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1997.
- Nelson, Emmanuel S. ed. *Connections: Essays on Black Literatures*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988.
- Shoemaker, Adam. *Black Words, White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989.

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

Conclusion

Pre-existence, non-dominance, cultural differences and self-identification are four major elements in the internationally accepted definition of indigenous people. "indigenous peoples descended from a country's aboriginal population and who today are completely or partly deprived of the right to their own territories and its riches" have been described as the Fourth World by the Shuswap Chief George Manuel in his work *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (1974). According to Richard Griggs it consists of the 5,000 to 6000 "internationally unrecognized nations" [. . .] which "represent[s] a third of the world's population". Distinguishing them from ethnic minorities Noel Dyck's 1985 publication, *Indigenous Peoples and the Nation- State* conceives of the Fourth World as "minority population that have no hope of ever prevailing within their respective national societies... [and] suffer from economic subjugation." These peoples are politically weak, economically marginal and culturally stigmatized members of the national societies that have overtaken them and their lands. Together with the Indians and Inuits of North America, the Indian peoples of central and south America, the Lapps (Saami) of Scandinavia, the Ainu of Japan, Maori of New Zealand, the Dalits and Adivasis of India the first nations peoples of Canada and other Indigenous peoples in different parts of the world, the Aborigines of Australia have come to be known as the "Fourth world". Struggling variously to retain traditional lands, to cope with government

administration of their affairs and to survive as culturally distinct peoples within nation-states, they have found literature as an effective means of articulating their interests and drama as the most powerful of them all.

The Aborigines of Australia are the indigenous people of Australia. They have the longest continuous cultural history in the world, with origins dating back to the last Ice Age and are said to be from South East Asia. Their oral literature and archeological evidences point to a culture that has survived for 40,000 years. Apart from traditional myths and legends concerning their origin and way of life, their songs and stories also include records of their frequent contact with people from Malaya and Indonesia and their later encounter with the Europeans. With European invasion the Aboriginal voices were silenced, marginalised and ignored. Later they were collected as quaint relics of a dying race and relegated to folklore studies and other specialised ethnographies, or were re-presented in non-white writings. Meanwhile Aboriginal culture and literature had adapted to the changes. Aboriginal Oral Literature depicted their reactions against white invaders and it draws attention to a universal awareness of illegal dispossession. Aboriginal ceremonies provided an outlet in which the Aborigines tried to look on the humorous side, mimicking the oppressor and proving that they were essentially, undefeated in spirit (Berndt 386).

Aboriginal writing in English, which is a comparatively recent phenomenon in Aboriginal literature has challenged the dominant "official" view of Australia's past and has introduced a new perspective based on *The Dreaming*. It attempts to "deconstruct the construction of Aboriginality" (qtd. in Hemming 26), to present "the diverse and dynamic images of contemporary Aboriginality and to point out that "the violence of the early contact period have continued to the present day" (27). As the first National Aboriginal Writers' Conference maintain, Aboriginal writing has "never been divorced from the aboriginal struggle for economic freedom, legal recognition and reforms of basic living conditions" (*Paperbark* 2).

Jack Davis (1917-2000) is one of the first published of Aboriginal playwrights, and he celebrates the Aboriginal voices of Australia. He began his literary career as a poet but is better known for his plays. As Mudrooroo Narogin points out, drama did not exist prior to the arrival of whites in Australia; the oral tradition that had provided the basis for Aboriginal histories had always consisted of song, music, dance and story-telling, elements which inevitably became central to the Aboriginal practice and experience of drama. The tradition had continued even after European settlement. Jack Davis observes that Aborigines "have always been acting. . . . We've acted up before magistrates, we've acted up before the police, we've acted up before social workers; we've always done our own mime" (qtd. in Tompkins 49). According to Davis drama is closer to

traditional Aboriginal oral narrative since it gives "a special look at the Aboriginal, a slice of Aboriginal existence or life" (Shoemaker 23).

Davis' plays incorporate elements that are essential features of Aboriginal heritage and culture and foreground the Aboriginal past. By fusing Aboriginal oral culture and western dramatic forms he deals with current Aboriginal concerns. Verbal and non-verbal trajectories of drama are deployed with great ingenuity in his plays and these include song, dance and the traditional modes of story telling. He uses the elements of oral culture to foreground a largely ignored Aboriginal past and to emphasize the presence and contributions of the Aborigines of Australia. He also shows the changes in the *Nyoongah* way of life by hybridising many experiences. The Aboriginal sense of place and displacement, tendency towards subversion, presentation of a distinctive Aboriginal view of time-space relationship, ethics, metaphysics and aesthetics together constitute an altogether new dramatic genre that certainly lie far outside the domain of Australian mainstream culture.

Ritual to Theatre and Back

Gilbert and Tompkins lists five aspects that comprises ritual:

- Presentational acts that often incorporate the representational, and sometimes manifestational acts which transcend both;
- Acts that are believed to be real, not fictional or play, even if aspects of play are incorporated into the ritual;

- Acts that are performed by 'knowledgeable human agents' for a specific audience which knows how to act or participate in response;
- Acts that are performed for the continuance and regeneration of a specific community often at a particular time, usually through a spiritual dimension; and
- Acts that are based in history and work to preserve history but which are not necessarily impervious to change. (58).

In Aboriginal Australia rituals included presentational actions like showing, telling, dancing and singing to the accompaniment of clapsticks, didgeridoo, etc. It also included representational actions like imitation, impersonation and other forms of mimesis, and sometimes, a transcendence or manifestation in which the performer becomes the ancestral spirit. According to Gilbert and Tompkins, today, Aboriginal ritual has been shaped by a multitude of manipulators including the forces of colonisation and hence cannot be recaptured in its 'original' pre-colonial form. But the combining of rituals with other cultural forms, provide new performative events and practices, which acknowledge the changes wrought by colonialism (58). When a ritual is presented on stage or is reinterpreted in the dramatic context, it becomes theatre/entertainment and its meaning is altered when placed consciously within a play.

According to Schechner, the move from ritual to theatre happens

when a participating audience fragments into a collection of people who pay, who come because the show is advertised, who evaluate what they are going to see before they see it; and the move from theatre to ritual happens when the audience as a collection of separate people is dissolved into the performance as participants. In his opinion, these opposing tendencies are present in all performances (155).

Brecht, and Meyerhold before him, worked to keep the tension between these extremes working throughout each performance by moving an audience back and forth moment to moment. The deep effect of Brecht's *verfremdung* is to unexpectedly shift modes, styles, rhythms, perspectives; and at the moment of change, when the affective part of a scene abruptly stops, or when a distanced beat suddenly becomes moving--the dramaturgic structure allows the writer/director/performer to make a 'statement', insert a comment, to encourage the spectator, to think about what he's seen and/or felt. The structure of the performance is obliterated by its anti-structure and in the liminal moment a direct communication, a deep contact, with the audience is made. (Schechner 155)

This exactly what happens in Davis's plays especially *Kullark*. While it contains the five aspects listed by Gilbert and Tompkins as comprising a ritual, it is at the same time theatre.

Comparing ritual and its importance in a community with drama and its function in society, M.J.O. Echeruo observes in the Igbo context that "drama is to the society what ritual is to religion: a public affirmation of an idea; a translation into action of a *mythos* or plot just as ritual is the translation of a faith into external action" (qtd. in Gilbert and Tompkins 56). The plays of Jack Davis illustrate this.

What Kacke Gotrick says of the Apidan theatre of the Yoruba people is true for Aboriginal drama and especially the plays of Jack Davis that they "are at the same time presentational and representational, . . . are efficacious, and . . . are conceived of as a duality by the appropriate spectators, comprising reality and fiction simultaneously" (qtd. in Gilbert and Tompkins 57).

Jack Davis has been "a pioneer in the resurgence and continuance of Nyoongah culture" (Mudrooroo 128), "and his work attempt to "enrich Australia's culture and conscience by centering the Aboriginal experience since the invasion" (Foreword *Barungin*). He has published seven plays (*Kullark/The Dreamers* (1982), *No Sugar* (1986), *Barungin (Smell the Wind)* (1989), *Honey Spot* (1987), *In Our Town* (1992), and *Moorli and the Leprechaun* (1994). Through his plays Jack Davis speaks for the Aboriginal population of Australia. According to Gerry Turcotte, part of

Davis' purpose in writing is both to celebrate the Aboriginal voices of Australia and to raise them loudly in areas which, for so long seemed deaf to their words. Moreover, "his success as a playwright throughout the world, and his reception by both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples from Canada to Australia, suggest that Davis has succeeded in tapping into a vein that threads across generations, language barriers and [. . .] racial lines" (Turcotte 2).

Davis's plays are an expression of "Aboriginality" which is "the legacy of traditional Black Australian culture" (Shoemaker, *Black Words* 232). However, the concept of Aboriginality predicates political engagement. As Davis himself says to Shoemaker, "if you're Aboriginal then you're a politician. If you're black, you're political" (32). The concept of the Dreaming is the central symbolism in Davis's plays and he uses a mixture of social realism and the anti-naturalistic style to represent the Dreamtime. As Justine Saunders points out, he never really resolves the two, "just as you can't go back to a traditional way of life, nor [. . .] live a totally European way, with its alien spirituality" (*Plays from Black Australia* vii).

By a postcolonial rewriting of the past he expresses the validity of Aboriginal history and forces a reassessment of Aboriginal history and drama. White Australian history celebrates "the achievement of nationhood and the quest for an Australian identity" (Dibble 93). Following Said's *Orientalism*, the "class of strategies that colonial powers

... adopted to construct the colonised Other” has been defined by Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra as “Aboriginalism” (xxxix). In this discourse, the Aborigine is seen as physically, psychologically and socially inferior and at the same time, through their identification with tribe, land, and nature, as metaphysically or spiritually superior” (Dibble 93). It excludes “as ‘inauthentic’ those blacks who are distant in space, time, biology and practices from their tribal origins” (93) thereby depriving them of historical agency and claim to land. Moreover, by writing the Aborigine out of history white Australians “bestow on themselves an antiquity and historical past which their recent arrival and colonial status precludes” (94). As Dibble and MacIntyre point out the Aborigines resist this erasure from white history by exploiting the double inscription of colonial discourse, by inserting a different set of attitudes, values, definitions and knowledges, through subversion, and through the language of the colonizer (94). By bringing two belief systems into play he produces two different, even contradictory, meanings. Through a reassessment of history he reveals the political process inherent in the selection, organization and presentation of events in history (106) and by foregrounding the Aboriginal historical perspective he disperses the authority inherent in official accounts.

Kullark tells the story of *Nyoongah's* reactions to the arrival of the first whites, who establishes the Swan River Colony in 1827. It also tells the story of the Yorlah family living in Western Australia in 1933 and

later in 1979. Yagan's rebellion against the European invasion of 1839 is shown to continue in the lives of the Yorlah family. *No Sugar* explains forced moves from places where families had lived for generations and explores life at the mission on which Aborigines were forced to live. *In Our Town* looks at this same family ten years later and depicts the post world war II experience of retuning Aboriginal Servicemen. *The Dreamers* chronicles the history of the contemporary urban Wallitch family. The increasingly degraded and oppressed Nyoongah family that appears periodically on the stage is linked to Worru and the contemporary family making a symbolic statement of the displacement of Aborigines and their present plight as a result of imperialism. *Barungin* dealing with Aboriginal deaths in custody shows a correlation between Black deaths, everyday lived experiences of *Nyoongahs* and their historical treatment. Through Davis' presentation of "Aboriginal history, the period of European neo-history" (qtd. in Elder 204) and "Aboriginal post-history" (Elder 204) one can also trace the evolution of black-white relations in Australia.

The presence of traditional performance elements like storytelling, song, dance and music, affect the content, structure and style of Davis' plays and consequently its overall meaning/effect. As key sites of resistance to imposed values and practices, not only do they act as "mnemonic devices that assist in the preservation of history" but also as "effective strategy for maintaining cultural difference. Since the

incorporation of these elements into western dramatic forms, involves a departure from the techniques and assumptions of realism and stretches colonial definitions of theatre, it asserts the validity (and the vitality) of the Aboriginal mode of representation (Gilbert and Tompkins 54).

Davis's belief that without a language there is no culture encouraged him to assist in the restoration of the *Nyoongah* language, a composite of the remnants of the fourteen Bubblimun dialects spoken by the original tribes of the area. The dialogues in Davis' plays which are in Aboriginal English, or Neo-Nyoongah as Berndt calls it, (*Kullark/The Dreamers*) have a liberal sprinkling of the Nyoongah language of the South West of Western Australia along with its accompanying paralinguistic features. According to Gilbert and Tompkins, the introduction of the *Nyoongah* language "helps to reinvest [Indigenous] peoples and their characteristic systems of communication with a sense of power and an active place on the stage (168). Moreover these words left untranslated maintain the integrity of "Otherness" and foreground the continual reality of cultural distance. It is a political act, a means of resistance or separatist celebration.

His characters lament the loss of language. At the same time words like 'wetjala' (whitefella) illustrate their ability to appropriate the language of the imperial centre and use it for their own expressive purposes.

Davis celebrates the vibrancy, persistence and resistance of

Aboriginal heritages and their survival even though in hybridised forms (Tompkins 48). His plays foreground the fact that despite bad health, disillusionment, excessive drinking, poverty, deaths in custody, and white hatred, the Nyoongah spirit has survived. While celebrating the aspects of Aboriginal life no attempt is made to gloss over the problems of Aboriginal society. As Saunders points out "there is drunkenness and aggression, but there is also humour, wonderful humour born of the breadline, and a sense of the real worth of everyone no matter how down and out. By appropriating the English language, its discursive forms and modes of representation, to bear the burden of the Aboriginal experience, Davis's plays present a form of postcolonial resistance to cultural hegemony. They are a "Celebration of Aboriginality through Theatre of Hybridisation". By combining aspects of Aboriginal oral culture with the conventions of Western theatre he redefines concepts of drama and establishes it as the most ancient of art forms.

Possible areas of research

The indigenous literatures of Australia, Canada and New Zealand have striking similarities of "concern, timing, theme and execution" (Shoemaker 247) and Indigenous ideologies find expression through an enormous range of cultural productions -- the visual, performing and literary arts being vital to the identity of native minority groups. The Indigenous writers in all these three countries reflect their trials of invasion in their works and present indigenous histories as lived

experiences; life story being the most popular genre. Founded on a powerful oral tradition, they speak of the resilience of the tribal group through a unique combination of wit and humour, magic realism and the supernatural thus defying non-aboriginal expectations.

In the 1970's and 1980's Harry Dansey (*Te Raukura: The Feathers of the Albatross* (1972)), John Broughton (*Te Hara* (The Sin) (1988), *Te Hokinga Mai* and *Marae*) Renee (*Asking for It*) Rena Owen (*Te Awa i Tahuti* (1987)) Riwia Brown (*Roimata*) Rore Hapiti (*Death of the Land*) and Hone Tuwhare (*In the Wilderness without a Hat*) and Hone Kouka (*Mauri Tu* (1991)) of New Zealand; Tomson Highway (*The Rez Sisters* (1986), Drew Hayden Taylor (*The Bootlegger Blues* (1990), *Someday* (1991), of Canada; Jack Davis, Robert Merritt (*The Cake Man* (1978)), Bob Maza (*The Keepers* (1988)), Richard Walley (*Coordah* (1987), Jimmy Chi (*Bran Nue Dae* (1987)) of Australia have all used drama to great effect to spread their message and educate the audience. All these writers see continuities with the past in their work and consider themselves as contemporary storytellers. They invest heavily in spirituality, which also colour their attitude towards writing.

There are striking parallels between the African-American and Aboriginal Australian experiences and literatures, which might be profitably explored. Emmanuel Nelson points out how, while Kevin Gilbert mentions Malcolm X and Frederick Douglass; Colin Johnson talks about Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver and Malcolm X; Jack Davis

refers to Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and Kath walker cites Amiri Baraka, in addition to Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin (*Westerly*). Moreover, the theatre of Ed Bullins is “dedicated to the continuing survival of Black People” (qtd. in Elder 101), minutely depicts the various facets of black existence. Arlene Elder describes his plays as contemporary rituals, by recognizing his “conscious desire to reawaken the power of this ancient form in his audience” (102). His plays, like *The Corner*, *In the Wine Time* and *In New England Winter*, reveal his ability to couch revolutionary interpretations of the black American experience in ritual form, drawing on the traditions of black oratory, narrative, street talk, mythology, and music.

Like the Aborigines of Australia who are said to be from South-East Asia, Dalits who form seventy percent of India's population are indigenous people of India, whose history have been traced to the people of the Indus valley civilization, 3rd millennium before Christ, and is linked to a large number of indigenous groups, particularly known as the 'adivasis'. These peoples have found literature as an effective means of articulating their interests and drama, the most powerful of them all.

Enough scope for cross-cultural Comparative Studies are viable between *The Dreamers* by Jack Davis, *The Shadow of the Tiger* by Chandrasekhar Kambar and *Nadugadhika* by K.J. Baby. Chandrasekhar Kambar, one of the towering personalities in Kannada literature, is a Dalit poet, novelist, folklorist and dramatist. His plays *Jokumaraswamy*

(1972), *Alibaba* (1980), *Sambasiva Prahasana* (1987), *Siri Sampige* (1980) *Tukra's Dream* (1989) and *The Shadow of the Tiger* (1990) rework his folk heritage (that of north Karnataka) from a contemporary perspective, blending folk performance forms, myths, legends and ritual belief, have been translated into English.

The play *Nadugadhika*, written in the Malayalam language by K J. Baby, and translated into English by Shirley Joseph, his wife is structured around the tribal ritual *Nadugadhika*, conducted among the *Panias* and *Adiyas*, the tribals of the hills of Wayanad, on the borders of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamilnadu -- and is believed to exorcise all the disease causing spirits in the land. The play transforms the religious rite into a historical one and deals with two hundred years of tribal history in Wayanad. While exploring contemporary issues the play interrogates the causes for the present plight of the tribals. By incorporating music, song, dance and narration, and by blending legends and ritual beliefs he tries to arouse memories of a forgotten past in order to effect a symbolic re-enactment of their resurrection.

WORKS CITED

- Berndt, Ronald M. and Catherine H. *The World of the First Australians: Aboriginal Traditional life: Past and Present*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1996.
- Davis, Jack, Stephen Muecke, Mudrooroo Narogin, and Adam Shoemaker. ed. *Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writings*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990.
- Davis, Jack. *Plays from Black Australia. 1989*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1997.
- Dibble, Brian and Margaret MacIntyre. "Hybridity in Jack Davis's *No Sugar*." *Westerly* 4 Summer 1992 : 93-98.
- Dyck, Noel. "Aboriginal Peoples and Nation-States: An Introduction to the Analytical Issues." *Indigenous Peoples and the Nation-State: 'Fourth World' Politics in Canada, Australia and Norway*. Ed. Noel Dyck. Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1985. 1-26.
- Elder, Arlene A. "Self, Other, and Post-Historical Identity in Three Plays by Jack Davis." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 25 (1990): 204-15.
- Gilbert and Tompkins. *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

- Gilbert, Helen. "'Talking Country: Place and Displacement in Jack Davis's Theatre.'" *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994. 60-71.
- Hemming, Steve. "Changing History: New Images of Aboriginal History." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 17-34.
- Hodge, Bob and Vijay C. Mishra. *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991.
- Saunders, Justine. Introduction. *Plays from Black Australia*. 1989. Ed. Davis et al. Sydney: Currency Press, 1997. vii-xi.
- Schechner, Richard. "From Ritual to Theatre and Back: The Structure/Process of the Efficacy-Entertainment Dyad". *Performative Circumstances from the Avant Garde to Ramlila*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1983.
- Seton, Kathy. "Fourth World Nations in the Era of Globalisation: An Introduction to Contemporary Theorising posed by Indigenous Nations." 7 July 2002. <<http://www.cwis.org/fwj/41/fworld.html>>
- Shoemaker, Adam. *Black Words, White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989.
- Turcotte, Gerry. Ed. *Writer's in Action: The Writer's Choice Evenings*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1990.

**CELEBRATION OF ABORIGINALITY
THROUGH THEATRE OF HYBRIDISATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF JACK DAVIS.**

By
SHEENA GEORGE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the
Department of English, University of Calicut.*

March 2003

Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Davis, Jack. "Aboriginality." *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*. Ed. David Horton. 2 vols. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994.
- . "Aboriginal Writing: a Personal View." *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985. 11-19.
- . "My Brother Harold." *Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writings*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990.
- . "The Bridge Dwellers." *Identity* 2:3 Jan. (1975): 29-30.
- . "Barungin (Smell the Wind)." *Writers in Action: The Writer's Choice Evenings*. by Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Currency Press, 1990. 179-202.
- . "The Black Scene – Yesterday and Today." *Identity* Jan (1978): 34-35.
- . *A Boy's Life*. Broome: Magabala Books, 1991.
- . *Barungin (Smell the Wind)*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1989.
- . *Black Life: Poems*. St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1992.
- . "The Contest." *Identity* 2:2 Oct. (1974): 27, 32.
- . "A Day." *Identity*. 2:1 July (1974): 15.
- . "Deaf Mute Mother." *Identity* 1:10 Apr. (1974): 33.
- . "The Dreamers." *Meanjin* 43.1 (1984): 44-48.
- . *The Dreamers*. 1982. Sydney: Currency Press, 1996.
- . *The First-born and Other Poems*. Melbourne: Dent, 1983.

- . "Heat." *Identity* 2:7 Jan (1976): 26.
- . *Honey Spot*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1987.
- . *In Our Town*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1992.
- . "Jack Davis: Playwright and Poet." *Aboriginal Voices: Contemporary Aboriginal Artists, Writers and Performers*, Comp. Liz Thompson. Brookvale: Simon & Schuster, 1990.
- . *Jagardoo: Poems from Aboriginal Australia*. Sydney: Methuen, 1977.
- . *John Pat and Other Poems*. Ferntree Gully: Dent, 1988.
- . *Kullark/The Dreamers*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1982.
- . *Moorli and the Leprechaun*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1994.
- . *No Sugar*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1986.
- . "Pay Back." *Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writings*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990.
- . *Plays from Black Australia. 1989*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1997.
- . "The Stone." *Identity* 2.4 (1975): 25.
- . "The Traumas Affecting Aboriginal Children and Which Retard their Progress." *Identity* 2.4 (1975): 3-4.
- . "White Fantasy - Black Fact." *Identity* 3.6 (1978): 27-29.
- . "Where are We Going?" *Identity* 2.10 (1976): 4-6.
- . *Wahngin Country*. ts. Unpublished play. First Performed in Perth in 1992.
- Davis, Jack and Bob Hodge. ed. *Aboriginal Writing Today* (Papers from the First National Conference of Aboriginal Writers, held at

Murdoch University February 1983). Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985.

Davis, Jack, Stephen Muecke, Mudrooroo Narogin and Adam Shoemaker. Eds *Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writings*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990.

SECONDARY SOURCES

"Aboriginals." *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1998.

Aboriginal and Islander Identity 3.1 (1977).

Adam, Ian and Helen Tiffin. Eds. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

Ahmad, Aijaz. "The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality." Padmimi Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 276-294.

Alberts, Franchesca and Christopher Anderson. "Art: Interpreting Reality." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 199-211.

Amery, Rob and Colin Bourke. "Australian Languages: Our Heritage." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*.

- Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 102-122.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. "Is the Post – in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?" Padmimi Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 55-71.
- Armitage, Andrew. *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995.
- Arthur, Kateryna. "Fiction and the Rewriting of History: A Reading of Colin Johnson." *Westerly* 1Mar. (1985): 55-60.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. Ed. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- . *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- . *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. 1989. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Balme, Christopher. "Between Separation and Integration: Contemporary Maori theatre." *CRNLE Reviews Journal*. 1:41-8.
- Bandler, Faith. "The Role of Research." *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. 55-62.
- Barker, Francis, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen. Introduction. Eds. *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*. New York: Manchester

- University Press, 1994. 1-23.
- Benson, Eugene and L.W. Conolly. Eds. *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Berndt, Catherine. "Traditional Aboriginal Oral Literature." *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. 91-103.
- Berndt, Ronald.M. "The Aboriginal Heritage." *Kullark/The Dreamers*. 1982. Sydney: Currency Press, 1988. xii-xxi.
- . "Opening Address." *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. 7-9.
- Berndt, Ronald M. and Catherine H. *The World of the First Australians: Aboriginal Traditional life: Past and Present*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1996.
- Beston, John B. "Aboriginal Writers in Australia." *Identity* 2.9 (1976): 9, 14-15.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- . "The Other Question." Padmimi Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 37-54.
- Blacklock, Wendy. Foreword. *No Sugar* by Jack Davis. Sydney: Currency Press, 1986. 7-8.

- Bloomfield, Geoffrey. *Baal Belbora: The End of the Dancing*. 1981. Intro. By Russel Ward. Chippendale: The Alternative Publishing Co-operative Ltd. 1986.
- Bostock, Gerry. "Black theatre." *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985. 63-73.
- Boulton, Marjorie. *The Anatomy of Drama*. 1960. London: Routledge, 1968.
- Bourke, Colin and Bill Edwards. "Family and Kin." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 85-101.
- Bourke, Colin and Helen Cox. "Two Laws: One Land." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 49-64.
- Bourke, Colin, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. Eds. *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994.
- Bourke, Colin. "Economics: Independence or Welfare." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 179-198.

- Bourke, Eleanor. "Images and Realities." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 4-16.
- . "Australia's First Peoples: Identity and Population." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 35-48.
- Bourke, Lawrence. "Jindyworobak Movement." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W.Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Bowden, Ros. Comp. "Being Aboriginal: Raised to think White." *Images of Australia: An Introductory Reader in Australian Studies*. 1992. Ed. Gillian Whitlock and David Carter. St. Lucia: University of Queensland press, 1996. 94-99.
- Boyes, M.J.E. King. *Patterns of Aboriginal Culture: Then and Now*. Sydney: McGraw Hill, 1977.
- Brisbane, Katherine. "The Future in Black and White: Aboriginality in Recent Australian Drama." 27 Dec 2000 <<http://www.currency.com.au/inthfu.html>>
- Broome, Richard. *Aboriginal Australians: Black Responses to White Dominance 1788-1994*. 1982. 2nd ed. St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1994.

- Bropho, Robert. *Fringedweller*. Sydney: Alternative Publishing Co-op, 1980.
- Brown, Ruth. "The Songlines and the Empire that Never Happened." Rev. of *The Songlines* by Bruce Chatwin (London: Picador, 1988) *Kunapipi* 13.3 (1991): 5-13.
- Brydon, Diana. "Australia: The Year that Was." *Kunapipi* 6.1 (1984): 79-83.
- . "The White Inuit Speaks: Contamination as Literary Strategy." Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Eds. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991. 191-203.
- Burden, Jenny. "Health: A Holistic Approach." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 157-178.
- "The Cake Man." *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*. Ed. David Horton. 2 vols. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994.
- Carmody, Peter. Brodies' notes on Jack Davis's *No Sugar*. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994.
- Carroll, Dennis. "Some Defining Characteristics of Australian Aboriginal Drama." *Modern Drama*. 40 (1977): 100-110.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts." Padmimi Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary*

- Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 223-247.
- "The Cherry Pickers." *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*. Ed. David Horton. 2 vols. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994.
- Chesson, Keith. *Jack Davis: A Life Story*. Melbourne: Dent, 1988.
- Chow, Rey. "Where have All the Natives Gone?." Padmimi Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 122-146.
- Christian, Barbara. "The Race for Theory." Padmimi. Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 148-157.
- Clare, Monica. *Karobran: The Story of an Aboriginal Girl*. Sydney: Alternative Publishing Co-operative, 1978.
- Coe, Mary. *Windradyne: a Wiradjuri Koorie*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1989.
- Coombs, Annie E. "The Recalcitrant Object: Culture Contact and the Question of Hybridity." Barker, Francis, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen. Eds. *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1994. 89-114.
- Coombs, H.C. "An Invitation to Debate." *Kullark/The Dreamers*. 1982. Sydney: Currency Press, 1988. ix-xi.
- Coombs, H.C. "The Role of *Identity*." *Identity* 1.2 (1971): 10.

- Dale, Leigh. Rev. of *Jack Davis : A Life Story* by Keith Chesson and *John Pat and Other Poems* by Jack Davis. *Westerly* 1 Mar. (1990): 82-84.
- Dampier, William. "from *A New Voyage Round the World: 1688.*" (1697). *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 303-305.
- Davis, Jack. "Aboriginal Australia." *Jagardoo: Poems from Aboriginal Australia*. Sydney: Methuen, 1977. 13.
- Davis, Jack and Bob Hodge. Introduction. *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Ed. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985. 1-6.
- Davison, Frank Dalby. *Children of the Dark People*. 1936. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1959.
- Dewdney, Andrew and Debby Michels. *More than Black and White: Racism and Everyday Life*. Stanmore: Inner City Education Centre, 1988.
- Dibble, Brian and Margaret MacIntyre. "Hybridity in Jack Davis's *No Sugar.*" *Westerly* 4 Summer (1992): 93-98.
- Dingo, Ernie. "Breaking the Rules of Theatre: Discovering Aboriginality Through Performance." *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994. 72-78.
- Dirlik, Arif. "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism." Padmimi Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary*

- Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 294-320.
- Djanggalawul Song Cycle*. Song 1. Trans. Ronald M. Berndt. *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 80.
- Dunkle, Margaret. "A Focus on Black." *Australian Author*. 26.3 (1994): 26-28.
- During, Simon. "Waiting for the Post: Some Relations Between Modernity, Colonization, and Writing." 23-45. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Eds. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.
- Dyck, Noel. "Aboriginal Peoples and Nation-States: An Introduction to the Analytical Issues." *Indigenous Peoples and the Nation-State: 'Fourth World' Politics in Canada, Australia and Norway*. Ed. Noel Dyck. Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1985. 1-26.
- . Ed. *Indigenous Peoples and the Nation-States: 'Fourth World' Politics in Canada, Australia and Norway*. Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1985.
- Edwards, Bill. "Living the Dreaming." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 65-84.

- Elam, Keir. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. London: Methuen, 1980.
- Elder, Arlene A. "Self, Other and Post-Historical Identity in Three Plays by Jack Davis." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 25 (1990): 204-15.
- Farmer, Alison. "Chapter and Verse on Life from a Perth Park Bench." Rev. of *Wahngin Country*, by Jack Davis. Black Swan Theatre Co. Octagon Theatre, Perth. *Weekend Australian*. 30.Nov. -1 Dec. 1991. 9.
- Fitzpatrick, Peter. "Drama (Australia)." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W.Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994. 370-73.
- . "Mythmaking in Modern Drama." *Penguin New Literary History of Australia*. Ed. Laurie Hergenhan. Melbourne: Penguin, 1988. 520-534.
- Foley, Gary et al. "The year of Mourning." *Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writings*. Eds. Davis et al. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990. 320-342.
- Frankenberg, Ruth and Lata Mani. "Crosscurrents, Crosstalk: Race, 'Postcoloniality and the Politics of Location' ". Padmimi Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 347-364.
- Frost, Alan. "Exploration Literature (Australia)." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W.Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994.

- Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Gilbert, Helen and Joanne Tompkins. *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Gilbert, Helen. "'Talking Country': Place and Displacement in Jack Davis's Theatre." *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994. 60-71.
- . "The Dance as Text in Contemporary Australian Drama: Movement and Resistance Politics." *Ariel*. 23.1 (1992): 133-47.
- . "Fish or Fowl: Post-Colonialism and Australian Drama." *Australian – Canadian Studies* 10.2 (1992): 131-5.
- Gilbert, Kevin. "Black Policies." *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. 1985. 35-41.
- . Ed. *Inside Black Australia: An Anthology of Aboriginal Poetry*. Melbourne: Penguin, 1988.
- . Introduction. *Inside Black Australia: An Anthology of Black Australian Poetry*. Melbourne: Penguin, 1988. xv-xxiv.
- . *The Blackside: People are Legends and Other Poems*. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1990.
- Gilliam, Cliff. "Hesperian Varieties: New Western Australia Drama at the 1988 Festival of Perth." *Westerly* 2 June (1988): 127-134.

- Gilroy, Paul. " 'The Whisper Wakes, the Shudder Plays': 'Race', Nation and Ethnic Absolutism." Padmimi Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 248-274.
- Goldie, Terry. "Signifier Resignified: Aborigines in Australian Literature." *Aboriginal Culture Today*. ed. Anna Rutherford. Sydney: Dangaroo Press-Kunapipi, 1988. 59-75.
- . *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures*. Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989.
- Goodwin, Ken and Alan Lawson. *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994.
- Goodwin, Ken. *A History of Australian Literature*. Hampshire: Macmillan, 1986.
- Gostin, Olga and Alwin Chong. "Living Wisdom: Aborigines and the Environment." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 123-139.
- Goulburn Island Cycle*. Song 4. Trans. Ronald M. Berndt. *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 81-82.

- Graham, Duncan. "Davis Spreads the Words." *Age Saturday Extra* 13 Feb. (1988): 10.
- . "How the Black Swan was Hatched." *Age Saturday Extra*. 24 Aug. (1991): 8.
- . "Verse from the Inside." *Age Saturday Extra* 9 Dec. (1989): 8.
- . Ed. *Being Whitefella*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1994.
- Griffiths, Gareth. "Being there, being There: Kosinsky and Malouf." 153-166.
- Groome, Howard. "Education: The Search for Relevance." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 140-156.
- Grossman, Michele and Denise Cuthbert. "Forgetting Redfern: Aboriginality in the New Age." *Meanjin* 57.4 (1998): 771-788.
- Haebich, Anna. *For Their Own Good*. Perth: University of Western Australia, 1985.
- Haigh, Christine and Wendy Goldstein. Ed. *The Aborigines of New South Wales*. Sydney: A Publication of the New South Wales Government, 2000.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." Padmimi Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 110-121.
- Harpur, Charles. "from *The Creek of the Four Graves*" 1845; revised 1867.

- The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 319-325.
- Harris, Stewart. *It's Coming Yet...: An Aboriginal Treaty Within Australia Between Australians*. Canberra: The Aboriginal Treaty Committee, 1979.
- Headon, David. "'Spanning the Sky with Outstretched Hands': The Making of a Poet." *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Ed Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994. 79-97.
- Healy, J.J. "Colin Johnson/Mudrooroo Narogin." *International Literature in English: Essays on the Major Writers*. Ed. Robert L. Ross. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1991. 25-35.
- . *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia*. 1978. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989.
- Hemming, Steve. "Changing History: New Images of Aboriginal History." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 17-34.
- "History." *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*. Ed. David Horton. 2 vols. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994.
- Hill, Barry. "The Life that Jack Built." Rev. of *John Pat and Other Poems* by Jack Davis and *Jack Davis: A Life Story* by Keith Chesson. *Age Saturday Extra*. 14 Jan. (1989): 1

- Hodge, Bob and Vijay C. Mishra. *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991.
- Hodge, Robert. "The Artist as Hunter." *Barungin (Smell the Wind)*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1989. xi-xv.
- Horton, David. ed. *Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*. 2 vols. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994.
- Huggan, Graham. "Decolonizing the Map: Post-Colonialism, Post-Structuralism and the Cartographic Connection." Ian Adam, and Helen Tiffin. Eds. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991. 125-137.
- Huggins, Jackie. "Respect Vs Political Correctness." *Australian Author*. 26.3 (1994): 12-13.
- Hutcheon, Linda. " 'Circling the Downspout of Empire' ". Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Eds. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991. 167-189.
- "Hybridity." *Key Concepts in Post Colonial Studies*. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Ingamells, Rex. "Moorawathimeering." *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 223.

- . "The Word Jindyworobak." *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 222.
- Isaacs, Jennifer. Comp. and ed. *Australian Dreaming: 40,000 Years of Aboriginal History*. 1980. Sydney: Lansdowne, 1996.
- Jagardoo. "The Stone." *Identity* 2.4 (1975): 25.
- Jeyifo, Biodun. " 'The Nature of Things' Arrested Decolonization and Critical Theory". Padmini Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 158-171.
- Johnson, Colin. "White Forms, Aboriginal Content." *Aboriginal Writing Today: Papers from the First National Conference of Aboriginal Writers held in Perth, Western Australia in 1983*. Ed. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985. 21-33.
- . Foreword. *John Pat and Other Poems*. By Jack Davis. Ferntree Gully: Dent, 1988.
- Johnson, Eva. "Murras." *Plays from Black Australia*. Sydney: Currency, 1989. 79-107.
- Jolly, Rosemary. "Rehearsals of Liberation: Contemporary Postcolonial Discourse and the New South Africa." Padmini Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 365-382.

- Jones, Anne. Ed. *Aboriginal Sites of New South Wales*. Sydney: National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1988.
- Kendall, Henry. "The Last of His Tribe." 1863. *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 90.
- Keneally, Thomas. *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*. 1972. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1975.
- Kerr, David. "Fictionalising History: Problem and Promise in Black Literature." *Journal of Australian Literature*. 1.1.(1990): 1-14.
- . "Portraying the Aboriginal People: The Role of "Aboriginal and Islander Identity." *Westerly* 3 Sept. (1990): 61-67.
- King, Thomas, Cheryl Calver and Helen Hoy. Eds. *The Native in Literature*. Ontario: ECW Press, 1987.
- Langford, Ruby. *Don't Take Your Love to Town*. Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1988.
- Lawson, Henry. "The Old Bark School." *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 259-260.
- Lewis, Berwyn. "Smelling the Winds of Injustice." *Weekend Australian* 26-27 Nov. (1988): Magazine 7-8.
- Lomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. 1988. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Maes-Jelinek, Hena- "Numinous Proportions': Wilson Harris's Alternative

- to All 'Posts.'" Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Eds. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991. 47-64.
- Marika, Wandjuk. Foreword. *Australian Dreaming: 40,000 Years of Aboriginal History*. comp. and ed. Jennifer Isaacs. 1980. Sydney: Lansdowne, 1996.
- Marshall-Stoneking, Billy. "The Enduring Quality of a Beleaguered Race." Rev. of *Kullark/The Dreamers* by Jack Davis. *Weekend Australian* 20-21 Aug. (1983): 14.
- Maza, Bob. "The Keepers." *Plays from Black Australia*. Sydney: Currency, 1989.167-229.
- McNaughton, Howard. "Drama (Overview)." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W.Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994. 367-370.
- McCallum, John. "New Voices unheard in a Dramatic Tragedy." *Weekend Australian*. Magazine 20-21 Jun. (1992): Rev.11
- McClintock, Anne. "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Postcolonialism' ." Barker, Francis, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen. Eds. *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1994. 253-266.
- McGuinness, Bruce and Denis Walker. "The Politics of Aboriginal Literature." *Aboriginal Writing Today: Papers from the First National Conference of Aboriginal Writers held in Perth, Western Australia in*

1983. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985. 43-54.
- McLeod, A.L. "Representation of the Aborigines in Australian Children's Literature." *Literary Half-Yearly*. 37.2 (1996): 103-118.
- Merritt, Robert J. *The Cakeman*. 1978. Rev. ed. 1983. Sydney: Currency Press, 1995.
- Modjeska, Drusilla. Introduction. *Coonardoo*. 1929. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1990.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." Padmini Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 172-197.
- Mongia, Padmini. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Moore-Gilbert, Bart, Gareth Stanton and Willy Maley. Ed. *Postcolonial Criticism*. London: Longman, 1997.
- Morgan, Sally. Foreword. *A Boy's Life*. 1991. by Jack Davis. Broome: Magabala Books, 1993.
- Morgan, Sally. *My Place*. 1987. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1988.
- Mudrooroo. "Black Reality." *Barungin (Smell the wind)*. Davis, Jack. Sydney: Currency Press, 1989. viii-ix.

- . "Being Published from the Fringe." *Australian Author*. 26.3 (1994): 15-17.
- . *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World*. 1983. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1996.
- . *Doin Wildcat*. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1988.
- . *Indigenous Literature of Australia: Milli Milli Wangka*. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1997.
- . *Long Live Sandawara*. 1979. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1987.
- . *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*. 1991. Sydney: Angus and Robertson-Harpur Collins, 1994.
- . *Us Mob*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson-Harpur Collins, 1995.
- . *Wild Cat Falling*. 1965. Sydney: Angus and Robertson-Harpur Collins, 1995.
- . *Writing from the Fringe: A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature*. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1990.
- Muecke, Stephen, Jack Davis and Adam Shoemaker. "Aboriginal Literature." *Penguin New Literary History of Australia*. Ed. Laurie Hergenhan. Melbourne: Penguin, 1988. 27-46.
- Murray, Les. *The New Oxford Book of Australian Verse*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Nelson, Emmanuel S. ed. *Connections: Essays on Black Literatures*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988.

- . Introduction. ed. *Connections: Essays on Black Literatures*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988. 1-9.
- . "Black America and the Australian Aboriginal Literary consciousness." *Westerly* 4 Dec. (1985): 43-54.
- Noonuccal, Oodgeroo and Kabul oodgeroo Noonuccal. "The Rainbow Serpent." *Meanjin* 47.3 (1988): 373-377.
- Noonuccal, Oodgeroo. "To My Brother Jack Davis: A Tribute." *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994. 16-21.
- O'Connor, Mark. "Jack Davis, Master of White Culture." Rev. of *John Pat and Other Poems* by Jack Davis and *Jack Davis: A Life Story* by Keith Chesson. *Weekend Australian*. 26-27 Nov. 1988.
- On Being: The Aborigines*. 7.1 (1980).
- Parry, Benita. "Resistance Theory/Theorizing Resistance, or Two Cheers for Nativism." Padmini Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 84-109.
- Parson, Philip with Victoria Chance. Ed. *Concise Companion to Theatre in Australia*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1997.
- Poad, Doug, Alan West and Ron Miller. *Contact: An Australian History*. Teachers' Edition. Richmond: Heinemann Educational Australia, 1985.

- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Transculturation and Autoethnography: Peru 1615/1980." Barker, Francis, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen. Eds. *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1994. 24-88.
- Prichard, Katherine Susannah. *Coonardoo*. 1929. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1990.
- "Protector of Aborigines." *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*. Ed. David Horton. 2 vols. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994.
- Quarternaine, Peter. "Bury me behind the Mountains: The Australian Aborigines, the City and the 1988 Bicentennial." *Kunapipi*. 6.1 (1984): 30-42.
- Radin, Paul. *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*. New York: Schocken Book, 1956.
- Reynolds, Henry. *The Law of the Land*. 1987. Ringwood: Penguin, 1988.
- Rickard, John. "Aborigines." *Images of Australia: An Introductory Reader in Australian Studies*. 1992. Ed. Gillian Whitlock and David Carter. St. Lucia: University of Queensland press, 1996. 61-74.
- Riemenschneider, Dieter. "Intercultural Exchange between Ethnic Minority and English Language Majority: The Writing of Jack Davis and Witi Ihimaera." *Imagination and the Creative Impulse in the New Literatures in English*. Ed. M.T. Bindella and G.V.Davis. Amsterdam: Rodop, 1993. 271-280.
- Roberts, David. "Self-determination and the Struggle for Aboriginal

- Equality." *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. Eds. Colin Bourke, Eleanor Bourke and Bill Edwards. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994. 212-236.
- Robinson, Fergus and Barry York. *The Black Resistance: An Introduction to the History of the Aborigine's Struggle Against British Colonialism*. Camberwell: Wedescope Internations Publications, 1977
- Ross, Andrew. "Theatre in the West." *Westerly* 3 Sept. (1990): 23-26.
- Rutherford, Anna. Ed. *Aboriginal Culture Today*. Sydney: Dangaroo Press- Kunapipi, 1988.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. 1978. London: Penguin, 1995.
- Saunders, Justine. Introduction. *Plays from Black Australia*. 1989. Ed. Davis et al. Sydney: Currency Press, 1997. vii-xi.
- Scalon, Tony. "Evangelists: The Aborigines in Missionary Literature." *Westerly* 4 Mar. (1986): 55-63.
- Schechner, Richard. "From Ritual to Theatre and Back: The Structure/Process of the Efficacy-Entertainment Dyad." *Performative Circumstances from the Avant Garde to Ramlila*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1983. 124-163.
- Scott, Maurie. *Black consciousness on Stage and Screen: The Presentation of Aboriginal issues in Drama by Black and by White Writers*. Working Paper No.10, University of London, June 1986.
- Seton, Kathy. "Fourth World Nations in the Era of Globalisation: An Introduction to Contemporary Theorising posed by Indigenous

- Nations." 7 July 2002. <<http://www.cwis.org/fwj/41/fworld.html>>
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. New Delhi: Peacock, 2000.
- Sheridan, Susan. "Mary Gilmore's and Katherine Prichard's Representations of Aborigines." *Along the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing 1880s-1930s*. New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1995. 135-152.
- . "Wives and Mothers like Ourselves, Poor Remnants of a Dying Race': Aborigines in Colonial Women's Writing." *Along the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing 1880s-1930s*. New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1995. 121-134.
- Shoemaker, Adam. "Aborigines in Literature (Australia)." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W.Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994. 10-11.
- . *Black Words, White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989.
- . "Prichard, Katherine Susannah." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W.Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994. 1309-1310.
- . "Sex and Violence in the Black Australian Novel." *Westerly* 1 Mar. (1984) : 45- .

- Shohat, Ella. "Notes on the Post-Colonial." Padmini Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 320-334.
- Slemon, Stephen. "Modernism's Last Post." Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Eds. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf. 1991. 1-11.
- . "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World." Padmini Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 72-83.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "How to Read a 'culturally different' Book." Barker, Francis, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen. Eds. *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1994. 126-150.
- . "Post Structuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value." Padmini Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 198-222.
- Stocks, Jenni. Comp. *Images and Language '88: Aboriginal Perspectives on a Celebration*. Inner city Education Centre and New South Wales Teachers Federation.
- Stone, Sharman N. ed. *Aborigines in White Australia: A Documentary History of the Attitudes Affecting Official Policy and the Australian Aborigine, 1697-1973*. Victoria: Heinemann Educational Books, 1974.

- Stow, Randolph. *To the Islands*. 1958. Middlesex: Penguin Books. 1962.
- Suleri, Sara. "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition." Padmini Mongia. Ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. 1996. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 335-346.
- Sutton, Leigh. "Additions and Rare Editions." Rev. of *Black Life: Poems*, by Jack Davis, and *Collit's Inn*, by T. Stuart Gurr and Varney Monk. *CRNLE Reviews Journal* 2. (1992): 53-59.
- Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*. Ed. John F. Ross. New York: Holt, 1967.
- Sykes, Roberta B. "Appendix: Keynote Address to the Conference on Black Literatures." *Connections: Essays on Black Literatures*. Ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988. 111-118.
- . "Love Poems and Other Revolutionary Actions." *Writers in Action: The Writer's Choice Evenings*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Currency Press, 1990. 27-41.
- Tapping, Craig. "Oral Cultures and the Empire of Literature." *Kunapipi*. 11.1 (1989): 86-89.
- Tatz, Colin. "Aboriginality as Civilisation." *Images of Australia: An Introductory Reader in Australian Studies*. 1992. Ed. Gillian Whitlock and David Carter. St. Lucia: University of Queensland press, 1996. 75-93.

- . *Race Politics in Australia*. Armidale: University of New England Publishing Unit, 1979.
- Tench, Watkin. "from *A Complete Account of the Settlement of Port Jackson*." 1793. *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*. Ed. Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson. 1990. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. 86-89.
- Tiffin, Helen. "Kendall, Henry." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W.Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994.
- . "Praed, Rosa Caroline." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W.Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994.
- . Introduction. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Eds. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991. vii-xvi.
- . "Look to the New Found Dreaming: Identity and Technique in Australian Aboriginal Writing." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 20.1 (1985): 156-170.
- Toorn, Penny Van. "Early Aboriginal Writing: and the Discipline of Literary Studies." *Meanjin*. 55.4 (1996): 754-765.
- Torres, Patricia Mamajun. "Interested in Writing About Indigenous Australians?" *Australian Author*. 26.3 (1994): 24-25,28.

- Turcotte, Gerry. Ed. *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994.
- . "'The Maker of History': Jack Davis- An Introduction." *Jack Davis: The Maker of History*. Ed. Gerry Turcotte. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994. 1-15.
- . "Speaking the Formula of Abjection: Hybrids and Gothic Discourses in Louis Nowra's Novels." *Westerty* 1 Sept. (1991): 61-72.
- . Ed. *Writers in Action: The Writer's Choice Evenings*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1990.
- Unaipon, David. "Wondangar, Goon na Ghun (Whale and Star Fish)." *Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writings*. Eds. Jack Davis, Stephen Muecke, Mudrooroo Narogin and Adam Shoemaker. 1990. St.Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996. 33-52.
- Walder, Dennis. *Post-Colonial Literatures in English* U1: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.
- Walker, Kath. *The Dawn is at Hand: Poems by Kath Walker*. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1966.
- . *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972.
- Walley, Richard. "Coordah." *Plays from Black Australia*. Sydney: Currency, 1989. 109-166.
- Walter, James. 'Defining Australia.' *Images of Australia: An Introductory Reader in Australian Studies*. 1992. Ed. Gillian Whitlock and David

- Carter. St. Lucia: University of Queensland press, 1996. 7-22.
- Watego, Cliff. "Aboriginal Literature." *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Eds. Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994.
- . "Aboriginal Poetry and White Criticism." *Aboriginal Writing Today*. Eds. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. 75-90.
- . "Backgrounds to Aboriginal Literature." *Connections: Essays on Black Literatures*. Ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988. 11-23.
- Watson, Ian. *Towards a Third Theatre: Eugenio Barba and the Odin Teatret*. With a Foreword by Richard Schechner. 1993. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Weller, Archie. *The Day of the Dog*. 1981. St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1992.
- Wheatley, Nadia. "Black and White Writing: The Issue." *Australian Author*. 26.3 (1994): 20-23.
- Whitlock, Gillian and David Carter. Eds. *Images of Australia: An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. 1992. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996.
- Williams, Raymond. *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht: A Critical Account and Reevaluation*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968.

Williamson, John and Ron Rudolphy. "Interview with Mudrooroo Narogin (Colin Johnson)." *Westerly* 2 June (1989): 83-89.

Wilson, Robert Rawdon. "SLIP PAGE: Angela Carter, In/Out/In the Post-Modern Nexus." Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Eds. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991. 109-123.

Wright, Judith. Foreword. *Jagardoo: Poems from Aboriginal Australia*. By Jack Davis. Sydney: Methuen, 1977. vii-ix



NB4513