The past *is* the present:
A cross-cultural exploration of the literary displacement of Indigenous people using a relational discourse

Thesis submitted by
Noela McNAMARA
B. Arts with Hons; PG Cert. Indigenous Studies.

in December 2010

for the degree of Master of Indigenous Studies
in the School of Indigenous Australian Studies
James Cook University

Statement of Access

I, the undersigned, author of this work, understand that James Cook University will make this thesis available for use within the University Library and, via the Australian Digital Theses network, for use elsewhere.

I understand that, as an unpublished work, a thesis has significant protection under the Copyright Act and;

I do not wish to place any further restriction on access to this work.

_____ _____

Signature Date

Statement of Sources Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

_____ _____

Signature Date

Statement of Contribution of Others Including Financial and Editorial Help

Financial support has been provided by the School of Indigenous Australian Studies (JCU) (administrative support and conference attendance) and the Graduate Research School (JCU) (conference attendance).

A professional administration service, Al Rinn Admin Specialists was engaged to prepare the thesis for submission. Al Rinn's brief was to format and proof-read the document.

Acknowledgments

I give special acknowledgment, my utmost respect and eternal gratitude to the following, whose generosity of support, good will, mentorship, guidance and perseverance brought this research study to fruition:

- Funding bodies including the School of Indigenous Australian Studies and Graduate Research School, James Cook University.

- My supervisor, Associate Professor Stephen Torre, School of Arts, Education and Social Sciences, James Cook University for valuable insight and suggestions at crucial points in the research process.

- My supervisor Dr Felecia Watkin, School of Indigenous Australian Studies, James Cook University, a very special acknowledgment and thanks for her mentorship and dedication to professionalism in keeping cultural protocols and cultural awareness at the forefront of this research, for re-reading continuous drafts, and for informing and guiding a novice on a difficult research journey.

- Supporters from the School of Indigenous Australian Studies, JCU, Cairns and Townsville (Professor Yvonne Cadet-James, Chair of Indigenous Studies; Mrs Valda Wallace, Deputy Head of School for their necessary validation of the premise of the research and invaluable support. To Professor Sue McGinty for encouragement to establish a personal and transparent standpoint from which to pursue this research. To Dr Tyson Yunkaporta for support and assistance in defining terms.

- A special thanks to my friend and mentor, Dr Roxanne Bainbridge, who was there at the beginning to inspire and challenge; in the middle for critique and review of conference papers and drafts; and currently as the end is in sight.

- Last, but not least, to Mrs Bev-Anne McLaughlin whose personal friendship was the inspiration for the journey and whose mentored readings and personal insights gave the research a focus that was deeper than words on a page.

Abstract

The written word is a powerful tool of modern society with words having a positive or negative effect on readers depending on how they are used and how they are interpreted. They bring stories from the past to life and invite possibilities for visions into the future. When there is not a united language of understanding of that past or hopes for the future between parties, however, representation (or misguided) representation of people, places, times and events can occur with devastating cultural and social ramifications. I argue in this thesis that literary representation of Australia's Indigenous people in post-millennial fiction continues to effect their physical and mental displacement through a perpetual reflection of the enduring dominance of white characters. This issue is examined through a cross-cultural critique using a relational discourse designed as part of this thesis to engage with the voices of Indigenous writers, poets and critics.

The works discussed are three prize-winning post-millennial novels: A Journey to the Stone Country (2002) by Alex Miller, The White Earth (2004) by Andrew McGahan, and The Secret River (2005) by Kate Grenville. All three authors are extremely popular with the Australian public and used extensively within literary discourses. I argue that these authors, who sincerely believe they are serving the interests of Indigenous people by revisiting the colonial era to promote an 'informed' awareness of the past through fiction, are in fact further negating any sense of connection readers may have to the current displacement (and discrimination) suffered by Indigenous Australians through the use of negative stereotypical representation.

Literature has the potential for social change as well as entertainment. Negative (colonial) representations destroy the possibility of enhanced mental awareness beyond that of the preconceived (and often biased) limitation of a literary white lens thereby diminishing possibilities for social change.

The use of a relational discourse exposes obscure points of literary disjunction for Indigenous people, and enhances the potential for an expanded comprehension and consciousness.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1 The Long White Line

***The basic tool for the manipulation of reality is the manipulation of words. If you can control the meaning of words, you can control the people who must use the words* (Philip K. Dick).**

1.1 Introduction

Literature is a powerful avenue for expressions of the imagination. It has always played a fundamental role in establishing social identity, enabling people to explore who they are and where they come from. It also contributes, and in some cases defines, our knowledge of the past and of people different from ourselves. Within the field of Australian literature[1] writers and readers currently face the challenge of representing and interpreting all members of society without prejudice. Over time, however, many literary and artistic representations of Indigenous people[2] and Indigenous cultures have been grounded in an ideology of racism which sought to degrade and subordinate them. Patrick Dodson (1994) states: "To the early visitors, we varied from the noble savage to the prehistoric beast" (p. 25). Racist[3] discourses enabled oppression connected through an intricate system of categorisation which allowed knowledge-based power to enforce domination (Tascon, cited in Schech and Wadham, 2004). Literary theories and critical discourse today eschew racism in all its forms, and are indeed concerned with exposing racist discourses in all texts. Today's readers of contemporary Australian literature expect

[1] Means the written word in all its forms and genres including mainly (but not exclusively) texts, novels, essays and poetry.
[2] Throughout this thesis, the term 'Indigenous' has been used in collective reference to people of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures. Where differentiation is required for literary or other purposes, specific reference to people or culture has been made.
[3] Throughout this thesis this term applies to any text that expresses the notion that "all whites are superior to coloured people" and provokes offensive, violent, biased, prejudiced and discriminatory behaviour (Rose, 1997, p. 117).

to find a sympathetic, empathetic or even reparative attitude to Indigenous people in relation to representation of events of the colonising era. As Carmel Bird (2002) suggests:

> Novelists have always found rich inspiration and material in the question of how Europeans and Indigenous people in Australia have related to each other since the late eighteenth century, but it is really only now that readers might be expected to demand a position on the question in the fiction that they read (pp. 1-2).

A conflict exists in the position of non-Indigenous writers within the fictive-historical genre which acts as a space of re-presentation of colonial settings that revive degraded stereotypical images as part of a discourse that was "the medium through which conceptions of 'truth', 'order' and 'reality'" became established (Ashcroft, 2007, p. 7). Colonial images were distorted and negative, and starkly opposed to the perceived 'norm' of 'civilised' society and established at an unconscious level of society where it led to "the naturalising of constructed values (e.g. civilisation, humanity, etc.) which, conversely, established 'savagery', 'native', 'primitive', as their antitheses" (Ashcroft, *et al,* 1989, p. 3). The fictive-historical genre demonstrates how a racist ideology of the past is still embedded in literary discourses. Those writers who wish to expose the injustices perpetrated against Indigenous people through this genre merely reproduce colonial images which have the potential to re-invigorate preconceived negative perceptions already established in the consciousness of contemporary readers.

It is the linkage between literature and negative perceptions of Indigenous people that I examine in this thesis. More specifically, I examine what a cross-cultural method of conducting a literary critique engaging with the voices of Indigenous writers, poets and critics can reveal about non-Indigenous representation of Indigenous people in post-millennial Australian literature.

In Poetic Expression

Fictive-historical genre

In stories of a painted past
reflections of regret
share no notion of the hurt,
the silenced can't forget.

The stain of ignorance lives on
in the hearts and minds of those
who suggest such deeds are over,
not linked to current woes.

The living force within the souls
whose images re-appear
are trying hard to tell us,
to listen – not just hear!

1.2 Stepping off the long white line

Wishing to investigate my notions of negative representation of Indigenous people in post-millennial non-indigenous literature necessitated a more informed view than a literary one. This pursuit led me to the School of Indigenous Australian Studies. I was invited to a weekend research orientation seminar where it was unsettling to find myself conspicuous by my non-Indigenous status amongst a room full of Indigenous

students, and even more surprised by my reaction of discomfort and apprehension. Most students were welcoming and engaging, but some were guarded and defensive with a 'what does a white woman want here' attitude. I later learnt the reason for this was that "'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary … there is a very rich history of research which attempts to legitimate views about indigenous peoples which have been antagonistic and dehumanizing" (Smith, 2003, pp. 1, 11).

A personal challenge was presented by one of the students who wanted to know why a middle-class, middle-aged white woman (who by her own admission had never had interaction of any kind with Indigenous people) would be interested in Indigenous literary representation which, by its very nature, was political. I responded in my defence that my interest was 'literary – not political' and that my goal was merely to gain a more informed opinion about negative stereotypical representation in Australian literature written for a twenty-first century audience. The questioner noted that representation of Indigenous people had *always been negative with socio-political motives*[4]. Furthermore, if I was not already aware of the continued displacement and injustices suffered by Indigenous people today because of negative representation, then I was part of the problem.

This comment was at once disturbing and provocative and demanded deep scrutiny and self-reflection of my *raison d'être* and, at the same time provided a glimpse

[4] This section is italicised to highlight the questioner's emphasis.

into the complexities of Indigenous representation. With an unnerving realisation of my lack of knowledge or understanding of ‘all things Indigenous’, from the history of Indigenous people and Indigenous culture to the complexities of Indigenous literature, the place of literature as a form of resistance became apparent highlighting the limitations of my comfortable white lens. Griscom’s (1992) suggestion that whiteness becomes the norm and induces situations where its significance in guiding our social location becomes oblivious, explained my limitations. The challenge of ‘broadening the lens’ carried me through that weekend and has continued to resonate as part of an ongoing personal commitment to remain aware of the privileges that are afforded me on account of the forcibly imposed displacement of Indigenous people.

In poetic expression

The white line

The white line stretched before me
ordering my world,
from far behind into the distance,
one side right, the other simply wrong.
It wound ’round corners, ran uphill,
snaked across the littered forest floor;
it guided and restrained me
ordered and detained me
until I was no more.

A robot like my fellow man
who followed on that line,
generations
of life and time eroded
by a thing unchanged in time.
One day I wandered from the path,
I crossed that straight white line,
’twas only then it came to me
’twas the blind leading the blind.

A whole new world was visible
diffuse with all its charm,

people and the landscape took on life.
What was once the wrong side
now full of change and possibility.
The white line here was faded
to a trodden hazy grey,
where people of a long long past
still see a different way.

Sprung from another source
birthed in another time
a wisdom of ancient wealth
is nurtured like an inner jewel
deep within.
It holds the key to overcome
the wantonness of waste
and aimlessness of life
on the right side of the line.

1.3 The source of blindness

The idea that the negative representations I had perceived in post-millennial literature were the consequence of an ingrained negative perception of Indigenous people, not just in my reader consciousness, but in the consciousness of other readers and non-Indigenous writers, was born during the course of the weekend seminar. Becoming aware that the limitations of 'my white lens' had informed and guided my reaction to, and expectations of, Indigenous people was the catalyst for an investigation into the source of a possible subliminal racist consciousness. Eagleton's (1996) statement highlighted the possibility:

> Discourses, sign-systems, and signifying practices of all kinds, from film and television to fiction and the languages of natural science, produce effects, shape forms of consciousness and unconsciousness, which are closely related to the maintenance and transformation of our existing systems of power (p. 183).

An examination and reflection of self followed on the basis of Fairclough's (1995) assertion that "our social practice is bound up with causes and effects which may not be at all apparent" (p. 133). This led me to examine my epistemological viewpoint in order to establish the basis of what had clearly manifested into negative perceptions, assumptions, and attitudes towards Indigenous people. Several common denominators became apparent in the social and educational spheres of my learning experiences. Because face-to-face interaction with Indigenous people was not a part of my social environment, and Indigenous voices were silenced for the majority of my education, my understanding of Indigenous people came from non-Indigenous (and negative) historical and literary sources. Dodson (2003) validates that "supposed 'truths' about us, our voices and our visions have been notably absent…as my colleague Marcia Langton so poignantly wrote: 'The majority of Australians do not know and relate to Aboriginal people. They relate to stories told by former colonists'" (p. 28). Carmel Bird (2002) explains the foundation of this literary transference:

> [F]iction for children is particularly revealing of the narratives the adults were creating and privileging. These narratives embody the ideologies which state the superiority of whites, of men, of the British, of Western culture generally, and in their positioning of the Aboriginal characters as either infantile of as primitive savage…The power of these children's texts can not be under-estimated in the shaping not only of the literature, but of the society itself…The texts write into the consciousnesses of children the language and values the culture promotes to those children (p. 20).

A persistent myth, prevalent throughout my learning, educationally and socially, often referred to as Social Darwinism, led me to believe that there were 'superior' and 'inferior' races of people with Aboriginal[5] people on the lowest rung of a ladder of evolution as opposed to Europeans being positioned on the top (Beresford & Omaji, 1998, p. 33). This idea was espoused as part of a theory of 'the survival of the fittest' and came about as a result of an adaptation of Charles Darwin's concept of evolution through natural selection and his prediction that "the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world" (Kohn, 1996 cited in Beresford & Omaji, 1998, p. 33). In turn, many mature adults, who still refuse to accept the concept or possibility of cultural differences based on Indigenous world views, continue to believe that Aboriginal people cannot evolve into civilised beings and are by default, therefore, still 'savages'. Martin Nakata (2007) asserts that this myth was adopted in Western disciplines "To apply some authority to the constitution of racial characteristics of the Islander people so that they could be understood in the West not as animals but as a people in a lower stage of development, 'as savages' " (p. 11).

In the past, many Australian texts by non-Indigenous authors depicted acts of brutality as part of Aboriginal culture from information gained from non-Indigenous historians, explorers' journals, anthropologists, and officials of Aboriginal policy (Dodson, 2003; Foss, 1988; Goldie, 1989; Adams, 1962). Within the literary field, the starting point for reflection of my ingrained perceptions was those texts whose images of Indigenous people remained deeply imbedded in my sub-conscious affecting a negative attitude. In the 'Forward' to Katharine Susannah Prichard's text *Coonardoo* (c1972)

[5] In this instance, the word 'Aboriginal' has been used as opposed to 'Indigenous' in accordance with an Australian interpretation of Social Darwinism (Murphy, 1982, p. 94/5).

(Miles Franklin Award winner and enduring inclusion on school and tertiary literary courses), Prichard advises that her manuscript has been verified by "Ernest Mitchell, Chief Inspector of Aborigines for Western Australia [who] had thirty years' experience of the Aborigines…could not fault the drawing of the aborigines and conditions" (p. v). Prichard (1929/1972) also notes that "the Australian aboriginal stands somewhere near the bottom rung of the great evolutional ladder we have ascended. His and our racial development was very early disassociated from the Mongoloid and Negroid lines" (p .vi). The continuing inclusion of this notation at the beginning of the novel gives authority to her cultural information and validates preconceived notions of a prehistoric people. This novel contains fearful depictions of the traits of Aboriginal people: graphic descriptions of a female initiation involving the use of a sharp stone; a mother heartlessly flinging her crying baby to the ground from a horse killing it instantly; and a stereotypical portrayal of the mysterious and promiscuous sexual enlightenment of Aboriginal women. In the novel, when the character Sam Geary in a drunken state late at night looks for Coonardoo, the narrative emphasises her supposed and unrestrained sexual desire, to offset his predatory lust:

> Coonardoo could have moved past and away from him in the darkness. But she did not move. As weak and fascinated as a bird before a snake, she swayed there for Geary whom she had loathed and feared beyond any human being. Yet male to her female, she could not resist him. Her need of him was as great as the dry earth's for rain (Prichard, 1929/1972, p. 203).

A Fringe of Leaves (1976) by Patrick White (Nobel Prize winning author for literature) portrays cannibal feasts as a ritualistic tradition of the Badtjala people of Fraser Island, but when the white captive Eliza Fraser devours human flesh, it is portrayed as only a desperate act of survival (pp. 256, 271). Aboriginal oral stories recount how local Aborigines rescued the Frasers, but the captain died. When Eliza Fraser was rescued and returned to England, she made her living giving embellished and lurid renditions of her experiences amongst those she called savages (Quaill, 2000). Thomas Keneally in *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (1972) (Miles Franklin Award winner and constant inclusion on literary and film courses) portrays the brutal killing of a woman, her baby and husband by Jimmy (pp. 100-102). Elizabeth O'Conner (Miles Franklin Award winning writer) in *The Spirit Man* (1980) gives a gruesome account of one man stealing and eating another man's kidney fat in the belief that it would give him strength to overcome his illness (p. 6). Although fictional, the images of conflicted Aboriginal characters within these texts lodges enduring images of Aboriginal people and cultures as barbaric and savage in the consciousness of predominantly non-Indigenous readers (including myself) and has done so over many decades. This validates Linda Smith's (2003) claim that "Representation is important as a concept because it gives the impression of 'the truth' " (p. 37).

On re-reading these texts, the polarisation of cultural behaviours still presents a stark difference between civilised and savage validating Bird's (2002) claim that uninformed perceptions "may … later be subverted by some adults, but generally, with the majority of unreflective readers, it can be expected to go deep into the consciousness and to perpetuate itself" (p. 20). The prominence of these texts on literary courses today, possibly without the benefit of any Aboriginal viewpoint, has a potential to preserve

negative images into the twenty-first century and gives credence to the claims of Patricia Grace (cited in Smith, 2003) that “Books are Dangerous” (p. 35).

During further reflection on the parameters and racial bias (now evident) in the education system that guided my intellectual development, it became apparent that academic discourses were constructed within, and conform to, Western ideological and philosophical frameworks. This concurs with Lester-Iribanna Rigney’s (1997) assertion that:

> Langton (1993) is correct when recognizing that historically, Australian policies and education institutions have been marinated in cultural and racial social engineering theories. Such theories have continued to influence current policy, research, government debates and social perceptions in relation to Indigenous Australians (p. 111).

The unobstructed pathway of unquestioned acceptance of such biased theories is, Smith (2003) suggests, because the “collective memory of imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, back to those who have been colonized” (pp. 1-2). One of the foremost ways of dissemination of this ‘collective memory of imperialism’ in Australian academia has been the history discourses, and in turn, the fictive-historical genre of non-Indigenous Australian literature

which finds its source material in historical accounts of Australia's European history. As Kate Grenville (2006) states:

> I was shameless in rifling through research for anything I could use, wrenching it out of its place and adapting it for my own purposes…But I was trying to be faithful to the shape of the historical record, and the meaning of all those events that historians had written about. What I was writing wasn't real, but it was as true as I could make it (p. 191).

It is not surprising, in view of the dominant white influence within literary discourses that reproduce negative stereotypical colonial images, that Indigenous people have remained little more than shadows in literary imaginations. Richard Altick (1967) suggests that we are:

> [I]ntimately associated with an emotional response to words and often directly responsible for it, are the images that many words inspire in our minds. The commonist type of image is the visual: that is a given word habitually calls forth a certain picture on the screen of our inner consciousness (p. 11).

The picture created on the screen of white Australian consciousness was one of fearsome, savage and uncivilised people with spears and boomerangs. Larissa Behrendt (2006) points out that "images of Aboriginal people or symbols from Aboriginal art and artifacts…the incorporation of a boomerang as part of the official Olympic motif" become part of the "unconsidered appropriation of Aboriginal imagery for marketing

purposes" (pp.1-2) and are reproduced when Australia hosts overseas visitors. Supported by tourist and media representations, the original colonial image remains alive in the consciousness of Australian society.

I also unmasked the construction of a *common*[6] identity for Indigenous people within my sub-conscious through linked repetitiveness of the same savage and negative imagery. Marcia Langton (1993) asserts this forms part of:

> An ancient and universal feature of racism: the assumption of the undifferentiated *Other*…the assumption is that all Aborigines are alike and equally understand each other, with regard to cultural variations, history, gender, sexual preference and so on (p. 27).

Terri Janke evidences this very point through literature in her book *Butterfly Song* (2005) when her character expresses frustration at society's misconceptions about Indigenous people. When a lecturer asks her character, Tarena Shaw, to explain Aboriginal culture in relation to Katharine Prichard's depictions of the character Coonardoo, she muses that "I want to tell him that I'm actually Torres Strait Islander *and* Aboriginal, but I'm too frightened. I've read the book and didn't understand it. I'm not like that. Does that mean I'm not a real blackfella?" (Janke, 2005, p. 74).

Bain Attwood (1989) suggests the reason for this homogenising process is that "the more consistently and rigorously authoritarian and oppressive colonial racial policy

[6] This word is used in italics to indicate an identity and traits shared equally by all Indigenous Australian people regardless of culture.

and practice has been, the more the conditions for a common Aboriginal identity have grown" (p. 150). This *common* identity is in sharp contrast to Leah Purcell's (2002) affirmation that "Australian Aborigines are not all the same, just like the rest of the world is not. We are all individuals and we all have our own stories to tell" (p. xiv). Her comment highlights the need to engage with Indigenous voices in any attempt to create research spaces where expressions of difference can be heard and validated. My investigation reveals that my negative perceptions and assumptions of a *common* Indigenous people were implanted principally through history and literary discourses in conjunction with public prejudice and open racial discrimination.

1.4 The research phenomenon

The consistent projection of a *common* negative stereotypical image of Indigenous people in post-millennial Australian literature, drawn from a racialised colonial history, indicates the existence of a continuing colonial consciousness which has the potential to continually perpetuate negative perceptions and attitudes towards Indigenous people. Henry Reynolds (1981) confirms that accounts of Australia's colonisation were not historically accurate and explains how this transpired:

> It is clear, now, that the boundaries of Australian historiography can be pushed back to encompass the other side of the frontier…The barriers which for so long kept Aboriginal experience out of our history books were not principally those of source material or methodology but rather ones of perception and preference…black cries of anger and anguish were out of place in works that celebrated national achievement or catalogued peaceful progress in a quiet

> continent, while deft scholarly feet avoided the embarrassment of bloodied billabongs (p. 163).

Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2004) a Geonpul woman from Quandamooka - Moreton Bay, outlines the extent of negative representation which has been generated, disseminated and perpetuated for more than two centuries due to incomplete accounts of Australian history:

> that Representation of the Indigenous 'other' have circulated in white Anglo discourse since the 1700s…Since then we have been represented in many ways, which include treacherous, lazy, drunken, childish, cunning, dirty, ignoble, noble, primitive, backward, unscrupulous, untrustworthy and savage (p. 76).

In Australian literature, this practice has been able to continue because, in the case of non-Indigenous writers, "their interest in the Aborigine is touched by an interest in themselves, in Australia itself as a land and as a social-political structure" (Healy, 1989, p. 3). It is suggested, however, that Healy's (1989) claim that "The dominant energies of Australian literature in the twentieth century had been directed towards the recovery of the Aborigine by the Australian imagination" disregards the fact that the methods of recovery also engaged colonial images with the potential to reinforce negativity (p. 291). The popularity of the fictive-historical genre reinforces negative colonial images which Goldie (1989) asserts " became a base from which the literary images of indigenous peoples grew" (p. 20). Although perpetuation of negative images may transpire unconsciously, it nevertheless revives a colonial consciousness which continues to impact negatively on the lives of Indigenous people by reinforcing negative attitudes. Francis Rings (cited in Purcell, 2002) validates this notion:

> There are prejudiced people out there in this big free country of ours, it might not be plainly in your face, and sometimes it depends on the colouring of that face as to how much they show you, but it is there. It's about attitude – what they have been taught and the ignorance and fear of something unknown (p. 86).

In *When the Pelican Laughed* (1992), Alice Nannup recounts walking in the street one day when one of three children sitting in a car calls the others: "Quick, quick, come and have a look. There's a nigger coming up the street" (p. 192). Alice approached the car and spoke to the children telling them "I'm proud of what I am but I'm ashamed of your mother and father" (Nannup, 1992, p. 192). The father approached ready to hit the child responsible. Alice highlights the futility of his action:

> [H]e hadn't got the point, it's not about belting the kid that says it out aloud. It's about not poisoning their minds to start with…That's where it all starts from, and they take that with them through their life…I believe that – it's the adults that teach their kids how to …treat other people. When little kids see someone who's darker than them, and they ask their parents about it, the adults say, 'That's just a nigger, a boong,' or 'That's only a blackfella.' That's where it all starts from, and they take that with them through their life (Nannup, 1992, p. 192).

Watego (1988) asserts that the White Australia policy (unofficial, but operative from 1901 to 1973) "helped to create a senseless prejudice against us [Aboriginal people] making us social outcasts in the land of our ancestor!" (p. 19).

The representations of brutal and uncivilised acts that affected negative perceptions and attitudes in this reader cast long lasting shadows of negativity in my sub-conscious and blocked any reason for either questioning or attempting to understand the discrimination and injustice suffered by Indigenous people today. Face-to-face interaction with Indigenous people allayed my fear of the 'unknown other' and forced me to examine the basis of the ingrained negative perceptions and assumptions in my sub-conscious. It is the premise of this thesis that contemporary post-millennial fictive-historical narratives based on colonial stereotypical representation of Indigenous people have the potential to reinforce negative perceptions and attitudes towards Indigenous people. Furthermore, constant fictional reflection on a nation building process which benefited only the non-Indigenous settler, while it may be the desire of post-millennial writers to develop a wider public awareness of Australian history, serves only to ease the emotional anxiety of a white conscience while it exacerbates trauma of the past for Indigenous people.

1.5 What texts and why?

This thesis examines and demonstrates a consciousness of negativity towards Indigenous people in post-millennial literature using a cross-cultural literary critique in three post-millennial texts: *Journey to the Stone Country* (2002) by Alex Miller, *The White Earth* (2004) by Andrew McGahan, and *The Secret River* (2005) by Kate Grenville. These texts were chosen on the basis of their prizewinning status, the popularity of the authors with the reading public, and their prominence within the academic field of Australian literature. Each of the texts engages with the story of white settlement and in consequence, the physical displacement of Aboriginal people. Even

though the texts contemplate ‘past wrongs’, these events are encapsulated as part of the settlers’ fight for material prosperity and a natural and inevitable step in the historical march of progress and civilisation. This notion acts to justify the displacement of Indigenous people and exonerate readers from making any uncomfortable connection to the gratuitous violence of displacement or the ongoing alienation and trauma Indigenous people continue to suffer in consequence.

Journey to the Stone Country (2002) by Alex Miller is a romance between an ex-grazier’s daughter and an Aboriginal ringer which takes place in a contemporary setting. Miller highlights cultural fissures of the present by drawing on conflicts and white injustice of the settlement era. Andrew McGahan’s novel *The White Earth* (2004) also takes place in contemporary settings utilising the Mabo decision as its central focus. This novel also includes the murder of Aboriginal people in the past. Although principally involved with non-Indigenous characters, the text ultimately seeks to invest the spiritual connection of Aboriginal people to the land in non-Indigenous owners to achieve an enduring sense of belonging. *The Secret River* (2005) by Kate Grenville is set in the early years of white settlement when the cultural frontier was raw, ruled by fear and violence, together with greed for land. Grenville (cited in Koval, 2005) states that she often uses historical details of the era out of context in an attempt to introduce a new way of understanding history. Secondary to her text is Grenville’s memoir *Searching for the Secret River* (2006) which recounts her journey of personal enlightenment while researching and writing *The Secret River*. Grenville (2006) states that her inspiration for *The Secret River* came from sharing a “pulse of connectedness” with an Aboriginal woman on her walk for reconciliation in 2000 over the Sydney Harbour Bridge (p. 12).

This momentary glance led her to connect her ancestor Solomon Wiseman, fictionalised as William Thornhill, with fictional characterisations of the ancestors of this Aboriginal woman in a shared literary space recounting a story of miscommunication and violence with historical information purposefully adapted with the free hand of fiction.

An in-depth cross-cultural critique of the above three texts using a relational discourse to engage with Indigenous voices explores the literary displacement of Indigenous characters. The role of literature as part of contradictory post-millennial representations is examined in Chapter two together with the framework for a relational discourse. Chapters three and four undertake the critique, and Chapter five summarises the outcome.

1.6 Summary

An investigation based on the results of self scrutiny and deep reflection of negative perceptions and assumptions reveals how outdated images of Indigenous people as ‘fixed in the colonial past’ pervade a consciousness obscurely locked in a generational bind that dictates terms of critical engagement and cultural interaction. Indigenous voices expose established patterns of negative stereotypical literary representation of Indigenous people and current discrimination thereby validating the notion of a link between literary discourses and their potential to perpetuate a sense of alienation and displacement. As long as non-Indigenous accounts of colonial history continue to inform the fictive-historical genre, the potential threat of enduring negative literary representations will persist for new generations of readers.

I examined the consciousness of complacency towards cross-cultural anxiety, oblivious to the involuntary displacement of Indigenous people, which I discovered in myself, family, friends and peers. The reasons behind this complacency became starkly evident in a statement by George Manuel (cited in Regan, 2005) that the root of social divisiveness is “our persistence in clinging to the old colonial myths that keep us in a state of denial. Myths that inhibit our ability to imagine something different” (p. 3). Adopting Manuel’s call for recognition and respect of Indigenous people as a new way forward became part of the challenge for establishing a standpoint from which to decolonise the process of literary critique and conduct a cross-cultural literary critique using a relational discourse to engage with the voices of Indigenous people as part of that process.

The design for the relational discourse to include Indigenous voices at an analytical level which is explained in detail in Chapter two focuses on uncovering the link between literary representation, current negative perceptions and attitudes towards Indigenous people, and displacement.

Chapter 2 Sharing Analytical Spaces

"*The ultimate weapon of mass destruction for any society is ignorance.*"
(James Depriest, 2003, Nobel Laureate)

2.1 Introduction

As the next step in the research journey, this chapter continues investigation of the underlying foundations of negative perceptions of Indigenous people within a literary context as the basis of the research phenomenon. It outlines the aims, objectives and rationale for the research project and details each step in developing a methodological framework designed to counter the ingrained bias and limitations of research focused through a 'white' lens. This chapter also explains how the framework enabled an informed standpoint from which it became possible to enter into a relational discourse with Indigenous voices to conduct a cross-cultural literary critique of chosen texts.

In poetic expression

Beyond the Barriers

He walked - I followed

He talked - I listened

He knew - I learned

Together - We shared

The magnificence of this great south land!

2.2 Literature of reconciliation and/or reparation

There is a need within Australian society to overcome historical and cultural antagonism. Sinatra and Murphy (1999) suggest that "Australia is at a cross-road, and…In order to resolve the disharmony resulting from Australia's recent history – settlement…by Europeans – we must recognise the vital connection between indigenous Australians and their countries" (p. 195). Michelle Grattan (2003) asserts that "Reconciliation is a road down which the nation's original citizens, and those who came after, are walking, bound together as members of the great Australian tribe, but still trying to get into step" (pp. 5-6). In consequence of this need to get into step, whether emotional, spiritual or economical, reconciliation and/or reparation have become key themes in post-millennial literature.

The continued interest in the fictive-historical genre in post-millennial Australian literature by "novelists…increasingly preoccupied with exploring history", indicates that Australian writers perceive literature as a vehicle for reconciling or coming to terms with the past (Sullivan, 2006, p. 12). Grenville (cited in Koval, 2005, p. 4) stated that her desire as a writer was to focus on the "fact that Australian history does have a series of secrets in it", while Miller (cited in Sullivan, 2006) suggested that history and fiction "are enriching, not conflicting ways of viewing the past" (p. 13). Their statements, in conjunction with the historical content of their texts, *The Secret River* and *Journey to the Stone Country*, indicate that as authors they did in fact intend to somehow reconcile the past. This theme is problematic and complicates both the task of the writer and the reader in relation to the texts. In one interview, Grenville (cited in Wyndham, 2005) suggests that "until we go back and retell our stories and put the shadows in we won't grow up as

a society" (p. 20). In a later interview, Grenville (cited in Wyndham, 2006) describes her novel and her journey to writing it as "a reassessment of what it is to be a white Australian" (p. 7). However, Grenville's fiction only retells stories taken from non-Indigenous accounts of white settlement. Such fiction is surely "hedged about by moral ambiguities" and principally serves the needs of a non-Indigenous readership thereby undermining the authority of any intended literary reconciliation (Kossow, 2007, p. 17).

From the earliest Australian fiction, representations of Aboriginal people have been negative. Bird (2002) asserts that "The colonial projection of fear of the Other is located in the Aboriginal people, and added to this is the evidence of a profound and generally unacknowledged guilt. And with the guilt goes denial" (p. 6). Therefore, while Grenville's text, interviews and publicity for *The Secret River* contain a hint of reconciliation, the stereotypical representations of Aboriginal people, together with an ending which promotes an overwhelming reflection of the privileges of whiteness[7] continue to feed a deficit discourse of negativity in relation to Aboriginal people. Similarly, while Miller's text *Journey to the Stone Country* recognises injustices of the past and present, particularly in the speech made by Panya, the Jangga Elder, Annabelle's proposed purchase of Verbena for Bo as the ending to this romantic tale gives dominant status to a non-Indigenous woman, and places Bo in a position which also promotes an enduring and overwhelming reflection of whiteness. This can hardly be seen as an equitable form of reconciliation and/or reparation.

[7] My use of the word 'whiteness' stems from the standpoint from which I began the research journey, and within the literary imagination is an expression of the privileges consistent with the features and expectations of the dominant culture.

While the original colonial conflicts which gave birth to the ambiguities and paradoxes of negative literary Indigenous representation remain unresolved in the consciousness of Australian society, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, they will remain unresolved in literature. Grenville (cited in Koval, 2005) states that her text "stands outside that polarised conflict and says, look, this is a problem we really need, as a nation, to come to grips with. The historians are doing their thing, but let me as a novelist come to it in a different way" (pp. 6-7). However, the revelation of white secrets of the colonial past as an act of reconciliation and/or reparation for white transgressions of the colonial era is problematic when it concurrently portrays Indigenous people through negative stereotypical representations. Such representations retain a potential to perpetuate the very ideology which gave rise to stereotype and negative perceptions and attitudes towards Indigenous people to begin with. Furthermore, a continued focus on images through a white lens reinforces the inequitable power base which lies at the heart of negative representation and alienation of Indigenous people in literature, and in life.

2.3 Indigenous voices in critique

In order to avoid an inequitable power structure within the research and to create a space for a cross-cultural literary critique, the examination included the literary expressions of Indigenous authors, poets and critics to create a relational discourse. Indigenous voices are interlaced throughout the discussions and critique in a critical as well as literary manner as reference points for entering into the relational discourse. Different genres of Indigenous texts were chosen to provide a wider and more varied expression of the experiences of Indigenous people. The three principal texts are: *When the Pelican Laughed* (1992), the autobiographical narrative of Alice Nannup, one of the

stolen generations; *Black chicks talking* (2002) by Leah Purcell, a variety of stories across a range of issues facing Aboriginal people and expressed by Aboriginal women; and *Carpentaria* (2006) by Alexis Wright, Miles Franklin Award Winner, a fictional portrait of life in the precariously settled coastal town of Desperance which contains stories of violence, murder, and conflicts of land and belonging stretching through generations.

Each of these texts offers a varied contextualisation of the experiences, from problems to successes, that Aboriginal people contend with on a daily basis. Alice's story traces a journey encompassing the twentieth century which enriches Australian literature and readers with experiences extending from a sad tale of witnessing Aboriginal people in chains to the story of an emotional and rewarding reunion with her people and her country sixty-four years after being removed. Alice Nannup's book highlights the link between past mistreatment (within living history) of Aboriginal people and the current fear, distrust, and anguish experienced in contemporary Aboriginal society. These emotions are also demonstrated in the experiences which unfold in the stories of Aboriginal women in Leah Purcell's *Black chicks talking* (2002). This cross-section of the lives of Aboriginal women witnesses first-hand the discrimination which occurs throughout a broad spectrum of the community on a daily basis due to negative attitudes towards Aboriginal people. Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* (2006) presents a vast canvas of land, sea and sky-scapes embedded with the spirits of the Ancestors to signify what being Aboriginal is all about at both a personal and community level.

2.4 Research aims, objectives and rationale of research design

The research aim was to examine a sample of post-millennial non-Indigenous Australian literature for stereotypical and/or negative representation of Indigenous people

and culture and investigate possible links to literary expression of negative experiences and/or attitudes and discrimination in Indigenous texts.

The research objective was to design a methodological framework through which a cross-cultural literary critique engaging with Indigenous voices would enable the development of a relational discourse to expose possible literary links between negative representation of Indigenous people in non-Indigenous texts and negative attitudes which alienate Indigenous people.

The rationale of the research design was to provide a method of literary critique that could explore the unresolved contradiction of outdated images of Indigenous people as 'fixed in time' in contemporary Australian fiction in conjunction with an Indigenous expression of alienation and displacement as the impact of continuing negative representations. For readers whose dominant perceptions of Indigenous people have been formed solely through literary or artistic images or through generational stories rather than face-to-face encounters, Adrienne Rich (cited in Lehtonen, 2000) offers a process to overcome this unresolved contradiction and move forward:

> [A]nalysing meanings firstly means looking for clues to analyse how we live, how we have lived, how we have been taught to see ourselves, how our language has on the one hand imprisoned us and on the other hand freed us, and how we could see the world differently – and live differently (pp. 15-16).

2.5 The difficulty with change

Changing the historical consciousness of the dominant culture from one built on notions of a peaceful colonisation process to that of an invasion with ignominious displacement of Indigenous people has not been easy. It is having a profound and divisive effect on Australian society. Attwood (2005) confirms that:

> [T]he foundational historical narratives that settler communities previously took for granted have been discredited by new national histories. This confrontation with the colonial past has been especially shocking in the Australian case, largely because its settler peoples, especially Anglo-Australians, 'are not used to thinking of [their] history as contentious, morally compromised or volatile…Coming to terms with this past has been difficult in Australia, then, not just because of the nature of its past but because of the nature of its history-making during much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (p. 243).

Social values and communication, both within and across cultures, remain in a state of flux with society unable (or unwilling) to undertake the transitional process. This has created a social dilemma for a society whose cultural awareness has been (and in many instances continues to be) informed by and enacted through cultural patterns, attitudes and instruction from previous generations of a dominant white culture. In discussion of a Newspoll Survey, Saulwick, Muller and Mackay (2000) suggest that:

> Australians want reconciliation but they are not anxious to do anything that could carry an imputation that they, or their generation, are to blame for what happened

> to Australia's first peoples…a majority of Australians do not believe there is a link between current disadvantage and the past (p. 33).

Judging Indigenous people and Indigenous cultures against the cultural values of a European society was always value laden and biased because of its failure to recognise the rights of Indigenous Australians to Indigenous world views and was destined to create contradictions and conflict. From before white settlement, European cultural values informed historical accounts that dehumanised and denigrated Indigenous people. Reports of Australia and its Indigenous population even before white settlement were a litany of woes suggesting that "the natives, they were a species of primitive barbarian beneath contempt, hardly a people but something exotic to be caught and caged for the freakshows of Europe" (Foss, 1988, p. 4). Dodson (2003) favours different historical quotes to make the same point: "showing anatomical characters very rare in the white races of mankind, but at the same time normal in ape types", and "Flat as reptiles hutted in the scrub…A band of fierce fantastic savages…Staring like a dream of hell!" (p. 27).

These demeaning and degrading representations of Indigenous people still plague post-millennial literature. In *The Secret River* (2005), Grenville's reference to "*poxy savages... partial to a tasty bit of victuals like your boy there"* re-engages the white power structure of the colonial era and reinvigorates discursive constructions of the social structure responsible for negative representations (p. 79). Although the speaker is a disreputable and drunken character, the suggestion of savages at the outset of the Australian setting has the ability to immediately open the mind of the reader to pre-conceived negative perceptions and images of Indigenous people. In Miller's description

of Panya's home in *Journey to the Stone Country* (2002), with a "foetid passageway…strong smell of excrement…and blowflies buzzing", despite the context of such representation, these images open the mind of the reader to a sub-rational negative visual image of disgust for Indigenous people (pp. 334-335). This sub-conscious determination accords with Goldie's (1989) assertion that creative literature reifies the Indigenous image and permeates the subconscious mind, in turn shaping and conditioning the dominant culture and creating a legacy of untenable power structures (p. 221). In consequence, therefore, repetitive re-presentation of colonial themes and negative images in post-millennial Australian literature will function to perpetuate a discourse of negativity which continues to alienate and displace Indigenous people.

2.6 Literary resistance

Indigenous writers have fought against this deficit discourse to demonstrate the other side of the historical and cultural frontier through the medium of writing, but as a minority group, this has been a long and arduous journey capturing a limited audience. David Unaipon (1929) was the first Aboriginal writer to attempt to infiltrate the consciousness of non-Indigenous Australian society through the medium of literature. Nelson (1988) states that Unaipon decided to take a course of lecturing on Aborigines and to go around the country to awaken interest in the Aboriginal problem by selling stories he had written up for that purpose (p. 15). From Unaipon's legend *The Story of the Mumgingee,* Nelson (1988) highlights a plea by the Yartooka, addressed to those of other tribes who had successfully completed the trials, which states that: "Greed and pain and fear are caused by thinking too much of self, and so it is necessary to vanquish them. Will you not go and do as we have done?" (p. 16). Moreover, Nelson (1988) suggests that:

> [A]lthough Unaipon does not presume that the White man will accept that his Aboriginal dependant has something to offer him concerning the timeless problem involving the relationship between intellect and appetite, he does, however; exploit the irony that the Yartooka's triumph over the sort of materialism which produced such barbaric results in the Great War argues for the Aborigine's awareness that solutions to such problems are attainable (p. 16).

This critique of the depth and intent of Unaipon's tale validates the advice of my fellow Indigenous student that Indigenous literature is 'by its very nature' socio-political. Unaipon's tale also highlights the point that creating an equitable and just society is not solely an Indigenous problem, but something that every member of Australian society must address individually and collectively. With the birth of a new century, Unaipon's achievements and the importance of his work have finally been recognised in the publication of a book of his complete Aboriginal Legends.

Likewise, honoured poet, Oodgeroo Noonuccal (formerly known as Kath Walker) is renowned for her use of literature as a vehicle of resistance and to appeal for justice in the face of ongoing alienation and displacement. She makes this appeal in the "Aboriginal Charter of Rights":

> We want hope, not racialism,
> Brotherhood, not ostracism, …
> We want freedom, not frustration;…
> Independence, not compliance,

Not rebuff, but education,

Self-respect, not resignation…

Opportunity that places

White and black on equal basis, …

Status, not discrimination,

Human rights, not segregation. …

Give the deal you still deny us,…

Must we native Old Australians

In our land rank as aliens? (Walker, 1970, p. 36)

Her poem *White Australia,* demonstrates her awareness of literature as an obscure source in the process of alienation:

Let little kiplings rant,

Narrow and arrogant,

Their chauvinistic cant

That White is nobler birth.

The best of every race

Should here find welcome place;

The colour of his face

Is no man's test of worth (Walker, 1970, p. 17).

A post-millennial literary image of the continuing divisiveness and alienation that still exists in Australian society is evident in an extract from Sam Wagan Watson's (2002) poem *hotel bone*:

> Existence only 2 minutes walk
> From some of the best latte lounges in the city
> Yet, White faces don't come down here
> Until they've been classified, unfit for duty
> No longer permitted upon the chorus line
> Of the cappuccino song
> Where multi-culturalism is in an airline format
> First-class, business and economy seating (n.p.).

A plethora of autobiographical stories and biographies of Indigenous people over the last four decades have covered a wide-ranging subject matter: *If Everyone Cared: an autobiography* (1977), *Moon and rainbow: the autobiography of an Aboriginal* (1977), *Don't take your love to town* (1988), *A Boy's Life* (1991), *MumShirl: an autobiography / with the assistance of Bobbi Sykes* (1987), *Haunted by the past* (1999), *Very Big Journey: my life as I remember it* (2004). As informed by my confrontational peer, this literature is also 'political' and driven by a desire to confront cultural conflict of the past (and the present). Aboriginal autobiography tells the other side of the human story in an attempt to awaken a realisation of how negative attitudes pervade Indigenous lives and alienate Indigenous people. Alice Nannup (1992) confirms this in outlining her reasons for committing her stories to writing:

> I've told my family some of these stories, but when they see them all together in one place, I think they'll be surprised. There are things I've told that will make them [family] sad too, but I had to tell those things because they are the truth, and part of doing this is the hope that all people, young, old, black, White, will read this book and see how life was for people in my time (pp. 217-218).

Leah Purcell (2002) confirms in relation to *Black chicks talking* (2002) that: "If these sort[s] of books aren't written then there will be another generation that will grow up in ignorance of the plight of Indigenous Australians. So this book is our way of giving you a little look into some of our lives" (p. xiv). Anita Heiss (2003) also addresses many issues which confront Aboriginal writers and poets within a predominantly non-indigenous literary arena. What Heiss illustrates through her work is that the re-creation of the Indigenous image is taking place through Indigenous literary representation. Not only does this Indigenous image have a 'real' life and culture, but it embodies an educated voice which advocates the right of Indigenous writers to express their own cultures, define their own representations, and publish their own stories in a manner suitable for Indigenous Australian readers. Heiss (cited in Reed-Gilbert, 2000) exhibits the strength of a new generation of Indigenous women participating in the reclamation and retrieval of Indigenous cultures through literature in her assertion that:

> [A]uthentic Aboriginal writers…attempt to break down the barriers in the literary world. Barriers that continually mean that we must define who we are, what we do and why we do it…To educate, to inform, to stop the continued loss of life of Aboriginal people and the destruction of our culture (pp. 37-40).

Despite positive self-representation, however, negative stereotypical representation by non-Indigenous writers retains the potential to undermine self-representation because of the dominance of texts that reinforce ingrained historically negative images and attitudes of the past.

2.7 Theoretical approach

Aware of the literary beginnings of the phenomenon, but mindful of the social and cultural nature of the consequences, a post-colonial approach was adopted in line with Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998) use of the term:

> We use the term 'post-colonial'…to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression…it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted. So the literatures of African countries, Australia [etc]…are all post-colonial literatures (p. 2).

Karen Martin, a Quandamooka Noonuccal woman, opened my eyes to the existence of an Aboriginal world view that was very different from my own. Martin's (2003) descriptions of "Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing" highlight the need, not just in literary discourses, but throughout academic discourses, for a methodology that engages actively and synchronously with Indigenous viewpoints. Nakata's (2007) statement that "the way we come to know and understand, discuss, critique and analyse in

university programs is not the way Indigenous people come to know in local contexts" provided the impetus to step outside established literary paradigms (p. 189). In consequence, a relational discourse was created to include the experiences and expressions of Indigenous writers, poets and critics contemporaneously within the literary critique. Martin's (2003) eight points for the harmonisation of research: "research assumptions, research questions, literature review, research design, conduct, analysis, interpretation, reporting and dissemination" were employed as reflective check-points to ensure a continuing reference to, and literary dialogue with Indigenous voices (p. 209). The words of Susan Young (2004) validate the necessity of such guidelines:

> I have to remind myself consciously that I accumulate the opportunities I have because of the dispossession of others who do not share my heritage, are everyday marked as different, and have to defend this difference, which is thus positioned as not the norm (p. 105).

Much of my interpretation of texts is influenced by the work in reader-response theory undertaken by Wolfgang Iser and particularly his notion that: "Meaning in literature arises from the convergence or interaction of text and reader" (Regan, 1998, p. 144). Regan's (1998) notion (inspired by Iser) that "the study of literature should be concerned not only with the text but equally with the consciousness of the reader in responding to the text", matched the contradiction between text and preconceived negative perceptions I had identified as part of my research phenomenon (1998, p. 143). Moreover, Regan (1998) (again inspired by Iser) suggests that the unrealised potential for meaning in the silences within the text increase indeterminacy and possible

communication as “The blanks in the text both induce *and* guide the reader’s constitutive activity, triggering off responses or ‘projections’ in the reader’s mind” to regulate and control simultaneously the extent and sequence of possible responses (pp. 143-144). This notion concurred with my idea that preconceived (ingrained) negative perceptions of Indigenous people were playing a part in guiding reader-response to colonial representations in post-millennial literature. In consequence, this response re-invigorates negative attitudes towards Indigenous people perpetuating alienation and displacement.

Wide reading of Indigenous texts throughout the research process, combined with constant cross-cultural mentoring and personal reflection on the gaps and silences, was crucial in helping to better contextualise Indigenous voices during analysis. Although I acknowledge that attempts to “give voice to the ‘other’ ” already favour a “metaphysics of self/other difference”, the importance of difference for me in this instance is the recognition, respect and acknowledgment of the rights of Indigenous people to retain different world views (Gergen & Gergen, 2000, p.1041). This is achieved by employing a cross-cultural methodology (i.e. relational discourse). An established friendship afforded me the opportunity to be informed about literary representations of Aboriginal people from the personalised viewpoint of an Aboriginal mentor (at her request). This achieved what Spradley (cited in Fontana and Frey, 2000), described as “the establishment of a human-to-human relation …and the desire to *understand* rather than to explain” (p. 654). This trusted cultural mentor guided me through texts giving significant insight into how cultural differences interact within texts, and taught me that it was necessary to ‘read the silences as well as the words’ to understand Indigenous writing. Suspending a personal code of ethics as suggested by Denzin (1997) to restrain from making culturally based

judgments of these in-depth readings, enabled me to discover “moral truths” about previously held unconscious perceptions (p. 284). This helped to explain the vast contradiction between ingrained perceptions of Indigenous people and those experienced during personal interaction.

Inclusion of the mentoring focus of this personal relationship as part of the thesis is paramount. Firstly, it acknowledges the major contribution of my trusted mentor to the research process through an expanded cultural awareness in analysis and interpretation. Secondly, it highlights the personal, intellectual and social benefits of cross-cultural interaction. This research forms the basis of a cross-cultural link from sharing time and stories in formal and informal settings which will continue for generations to come.

In Poetic Expression

Getting to know the Other
(for Wari – Alice Nannup)

You came to me
as words upon a page
to reach beneath my skin
a spirit and a sage

Your pain
crossed the threshold of my mind
with long unconscious grief
so deep – ’twas undefined

Despite the colour of our skin
we share one blood
my mother could be you
who stands so proud.

Your words of wisdom stir me
to open hearts and minds
to the cause of blind injustice
as it constricts and blinds.

My journey lies before me
a path I do not know
but with your wings to guide me
I shall follow where you show.

2.8 Methodology

A significant feature of entering the relational discourse to analyse data was crossing the cultural void to open a Western white consciousness (or white lens) to a value-free acceptance of and respect for different world views. This necessitated inclusion and acknowledgment of the voices of Indigenous people who, in the face of negative attitudes, continue to resist the alienation and displacement imposed on them by the dominant culture. Rigney (1997) asserts that: "The cultural assumptions throughout dominant epistemologies in Australia are oblivious of Indigenous traditions and concerns. The research academy and its epistemologies have been constructed essentially for and by non-Indigenous Australians" (p. 114).

A diagrammatic representation of a methodological framework (Figure 2.1) shows the seven steps involved in the process of crossing the cultural void to enter into a relational discourse which includes Indigenous voices in a shared analytical space for the purpose of conducting a literary critique. The methodological framework is designed around a seven step plan to achieve the inclusion of Indigenous voices in literary critique as part of a relational discourse. The idea for this relational discourse was influenced by the work of Karen Martin (2003) and Lester-Irabinna Rigney (1997) which highlights the need for new research methodologies with transparent methods of cross-cultural research. Aspects of literary procedure and theory were drawn from Gibbons (1984), Regan

(1998), and Eagleton (1996). The use of transcription conventions as the first stage in the selection of narrative passages was drawn from a paper on Qualitative Inquiry by Judith Lapadat and Anne Lindsay (1999) entitled “Transcription in Research and Practice: From standardisation of Technique to Interpretive Positionings”, and more specifically, their suggestion that “language itself is not transparent and hence constitutes a rich source of examinable data” (p. 65). This accorded with the notion that because of the variables within interpretation of fictional texts, it was crucial to offset such interpretations with Indigenous voices.

The idea of using qualitative thematic analysis and processes came from, and were adaptations of, models proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006) and LeCompte & Schensul (1999). A detailed description of the step-by-step process in application of the Methodological Framework for the relational discourse follows Figure 2.1.

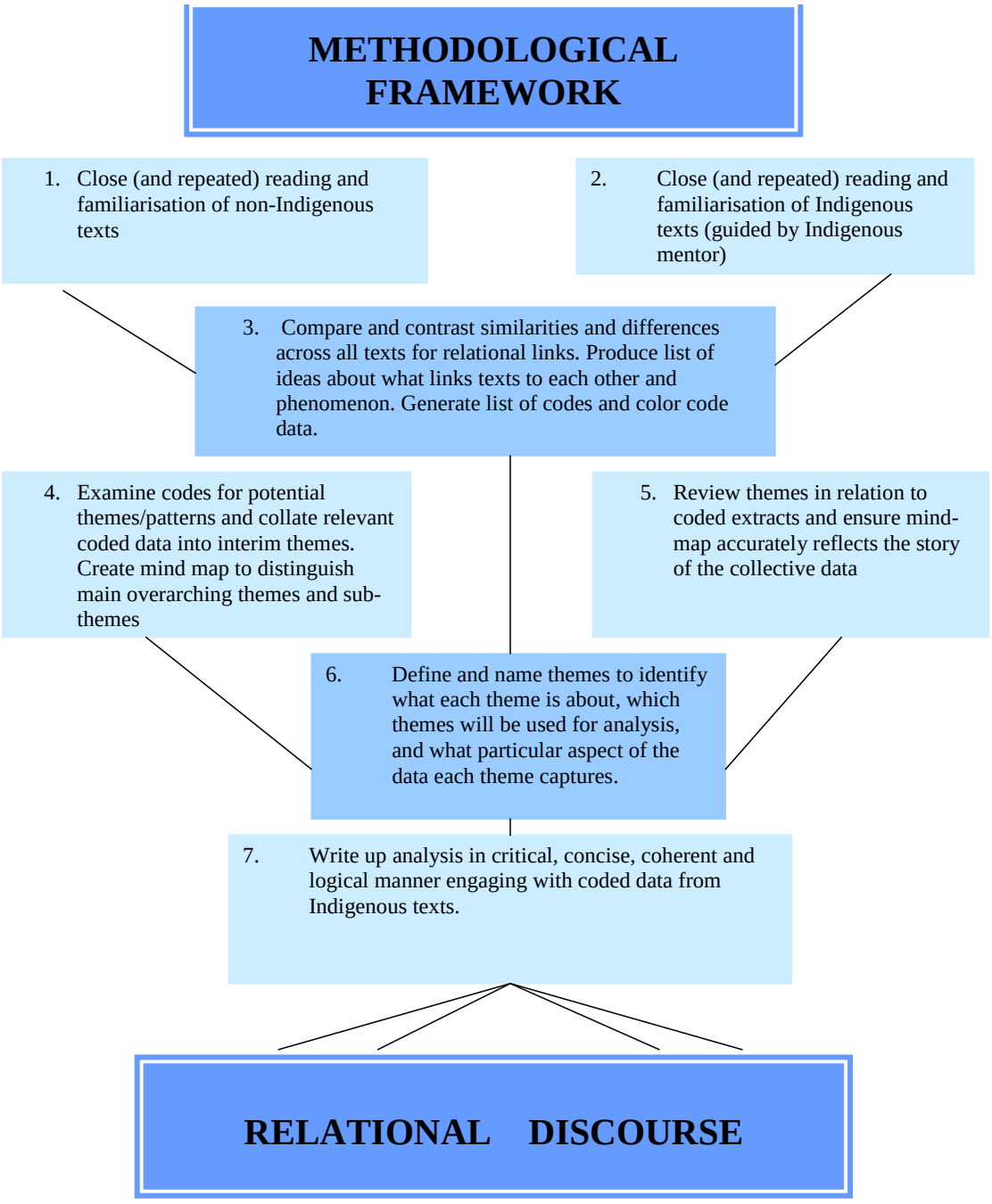

Figure 2.1 Methodological Framework

Seven steps of methodological framework for relational discourse

Step 1. *Close (repeated) reading and familiarisation of non-Indigenous texts*.

I immersed myself over several readings in the texts by non-Indigenous authors, *Journey to the Stone Country, The White Earth* and *The Secret River,* along with its accompanying memoir *Searching for the Secret River,* to familiarise myself with the texts and gain a general impression of their meaning. In accordance with literary practice, I identified and extracted passages with distinctive features to contemplate their significance in relation to the research phenomenon, individually or collectively. Whilst I was not searching for specific meanings or patterns during this stage, I found that my readings were influenced (albeit unintentionally) by marketplace publicity, author interviews in the media, and literary discussions with academic colleagues regarding the question of history (see Table 2.1 for example of extract with codes applied).

Step 2. *Close (repeated) reading and familiarisation of Indigenous texts (with aid of Indigenous mentor)*. I immersed myself over several readings (and the aid of an Indigenous mentor) in the texts by Indigenous authors: *When the Pelican Laughed, Black chicks talking,* and *Carpentaria*, to familiarise myself with the texts and to attempt to understand the general meaning of each text and the difference in motivating forces behind Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors. I followed normal literary practice to identify and read closely extracts with distinguishing features in expressions of experience to contemplate their significance in relation to the research phenomenon, individually or collectively. (Close contact with my Indigenous mentor at this stage helped to overcome biased reader-response through the long established expectations and limitations of my ‘white’ lens. The mentor exposed what was not being said by pointing

out the gaps and silences (validating Iser's theory of indeterminacy) in a bid to awaken an awareness and respect for the social impact of past history on Indigenous people. This was imperative to arrive at a 'relational' understanding of the texts (see Table 2.1 for example of extract with codes applied).

Step 3. *Compare and contrast similarities and differences across all texts for relational links. Produce list of ideas about what links texts to each other and to phenomenon. Generate list of codes and colour code data.* After in-depth contemplation *o*f significance of distinguishing features and comparing and contrasting similarities and differences across extracts, a list of ideas of relational links was produced setting out any links between the texts and/or the research phenomenon. Passages were identified that linked ideas in non-Indigenous texts to each other, to expressions of experience in Indigenous texts, or to the research phenomenon. A list of codes was generated to help organise data into meaningful groups and relevant data was colour coded (see Table 2.2 for example of codes generated).

Step 4. *Examine codes for potential themes/patterns and collate relevant coded data into interim themes. Create mind-map to distinguish main overarching themes and sub-themes.* Codes were examined for potential collective themes/ patterns and colour coded data was collated into interim themes. Once a large mind-map of all major and minor themes was created, themes were graded to distinguish main overarching themes from sub-themes and then cross-examined for overlapping to reduce themes (and data) to a manageable size for the scope of the project (see Figures 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 for thematic maps showing necessary reductions).

Step 5. *Review themes in relation to coded extracts and ensure mind-map accurately reflects the story of the collective data.* A review of themes required further re-reading of the data extracts to validate the relationship between themes and data (coded extracts) and provided a cross-check that data had not been overlooked along the way. It also ensured that the mind-map accurately reflected meanings evident across all data.

Step 6. *Name and define themes to identify: the context of each theme, which themes to use for analysis, and what particular aspect of the data each theme captures.* Naming themes helped to define them, which necessitated a detailed description of the themes to help identify and clarify the individual story of each theme; their relationship to each other; and their overall relationship to the research phenomenon. This was achieved by re-examining distinguishing features and identifying what idea in the texts had led to the theme to begin with. It was also necessary to establish that the collective story of the themes coalesced with the themes mind-mapped for critique.

Step 7. *Write up analysis in critical, concise, coherent and logical manner engaging with coded data from Indigenous texts.* The process of writing-up the analysis in a critical and concise manner including data from the Indigenous texts necessarily engaged the voices of Indigenous writers, poets and critics in support or as validation. This inclusion was in fact the activation of the relational discourse in the process of conducting a cross-cultural literary critique. This cross-cultural relational discourse brought aspects of the phenomenon to light which would have otherwise possibly

remained undetected through the limited lens of dominant white research epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies.

Data extract, codes generated and thematic maps

Table 2.1 Example of data extract with colour codes from Step 3 applied

Data extract	Codes
Non-Indigenous text (*The Secret River* (2005, p.196/7) One…came right up to Thornhill, reaching out and placing a long black hand on his forearm. Authority radiated from this naked old man like heat off a fire. A stream of words began to come out of his mouth. Thornhill forced himself to break the spell…his voice harsh, cutting across the flow. He bent down and with a twig drew marks on the dust: a curving line that was the river, and a tidy square representing his own hundred acres. *This mine now. Thornhill's place…You got all the rest…You got the whole blessed rest of it, mate, and welcome to it.*…The old man…pointed at the [daisy] roots and spoke again. Finally he took a bite …Chewed, swallowed, nodded…Thornhill…understood. The man snapped off a finger of root and held it out to Thornhill…But Thornhill did not intend to eat*…Monkey food, I would call that, mate*… The man was vehement now. He was explaining something in detail. He turned and pointed towards the river-flats, holding up the bundle of roots…*Yes, mate,* Thornhill said. *You can keep your monkey's balls that you like so much…We'll stick to our victuals, mate, you stick to yours…Good as gold,* he told them all when he got back to the hut. *Not a worry in the wide world. They'll be off again by and by.*	**1**. Thornhill **fears the unknown** he senses in the authority of this naked old man. **2**. Assumed **white authority** by cutting off the old man's words. **3**.Drawing 'his' hundred acres shows assumed **land ownership**, a privilege. **4**. References to Monkey food place the Aborigines on a level which is not human – **stereotypical notion of uncivilised - and therefore savage.** **5**. Thornhill exhibits **white ignorance** in making no attempt to understand the old man and believing because he had the last word, he had got his point across.
Indigenous text (Francis Rings, in *Black chicks talking* (2002m p.85/6) It was hard to believe some of the ignorance of the local white people there. I could call it a lot of things, but when it comes down to it, it really is ignorance…outside the bank they have grown cactuses there so after they [the Blackfellas] got their pensions, they couldn't sit there. We went into this shop, and because we weren't buying anything, they kicked us out…There are prejudiced people out there in this big free country of ours, it might not be plainly in your face, and sometimes it depends on the colouring of that face as to how much they show you, but it is there. It's about attitude – what they have been taught and the ignorance and fear of something unknown.	**1.** Expression of currency of **white ignorance.** **2. White domination** of public space by destroying popular meeting spot of Aboriginal people. **3.** Eviction is clear instance of **Racial discrimination.** **4. Stereotypical assumptions** that Aboriginal people (if not there to buy) will thieve. **5.** Both incidents evidence currency of **displacement and alienation** through **white authority.** **6.** Expression of **ongoing negative attitudes,** and **fear of the unknown.**

Table 2.2 Example of codes generated, usage and links between data

Indigenous issues	Code	Non-Indigenous usage
Negative assumptions, images, attitudes, treatment	Stereotyping	Representation- animalistic features, uncivilised habits, savages
Ignorance passed through generations, still considered savages	Negative attitudes /Discrimination	Preconceived notions, barbaric race, not equal, racism acceptable
Aboriginal place, land of ancestors, spiritually connected, sovereignty through belonging	Place/Belonging/Ownership/ Spiritual connection	Displaced, need new place, need to belong, need land ownership to achieve this aim
Alienation, stereotyped as savage, no respect	World views/Cultural differences	Linear, traditions of generations of civilisation
Need to understand why, disadvantaged as consequence	Historical events/The past	Secrets in white history, recognised, now past
Stolen generation, Community model, fractured in consequence of social policies, regrouping	Family	Patriarchal model, violence part of maintaining control, fractured, vulnerable in isolation
Fear of being rejected, of social policies that infringe on families and communities, of white ignorance	Fear/Vulnerability/ Government policies	Afraid of unknown, differences in landscape, cultures and languages, vulnerable because of isolation
Displacement, alienation	Whiteness/Domination/ Reflection	Right to place & privileges evidenced in consequence
Disrespect for Indigenous cultures, disadvantaged as minority group	Race/Authority	Belief in superiority of white race, power through dominant culture
Need to be explored and explained, ongoing trauma	White Secrets/Silence	Exposing historical violence of settlers acts as form of apology, then over
Cannot detach from ancestral connection to place which forms part of body and soul of Indigenous people	Exclusion/Alienation	Generational learning of negative attitudes through racist discourses

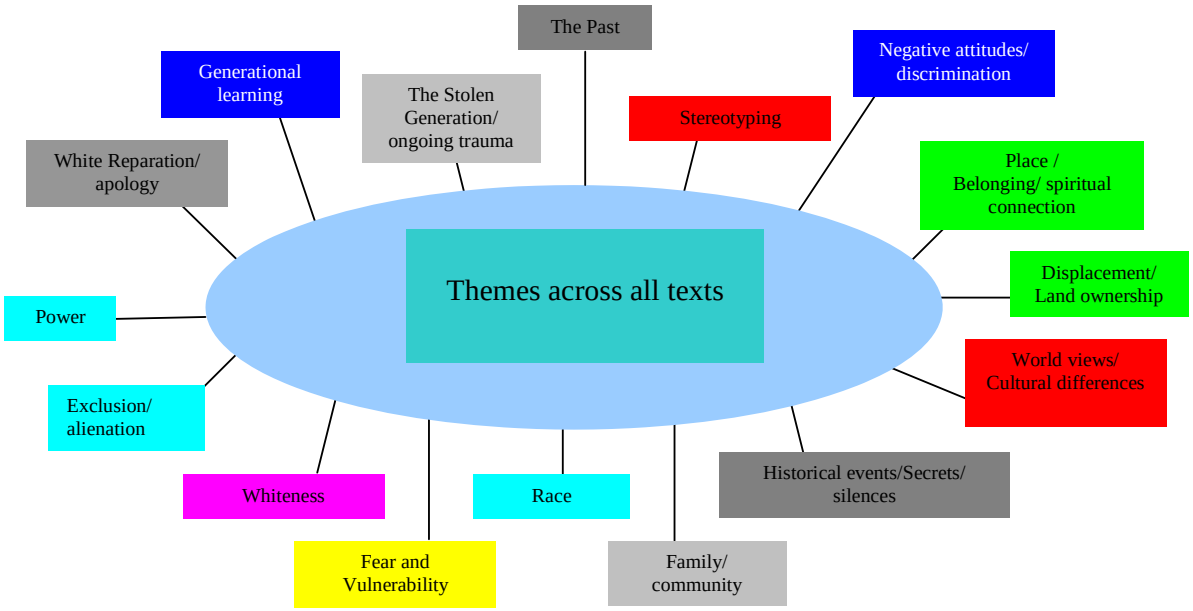

Figure 2.2 Thematic map showing initial themes

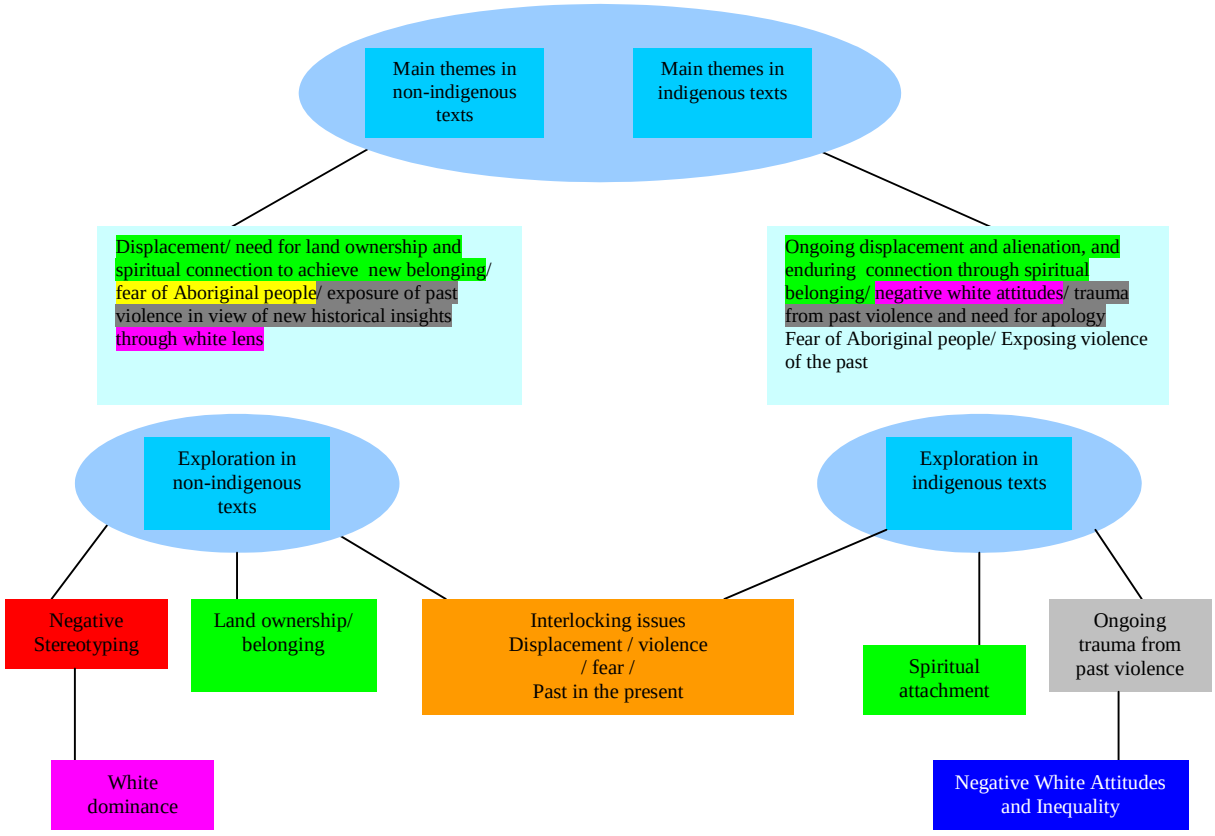

Figure 2.3 Developed thematic maps through cross-referencing of texts

Figure 2.4 Thematic map highlighting two main themes

2.9 Summary

Literary critique using this method provides evidence of how reading, which is seemingly a benign social activity, can and often does in fact subliminally reinforce negative attitudes towards Indigenous people by reinvigorating preconceived negative perceptions. Ruby Langford 'Ginibi' verifies that "how these people [white people] perceive us to be through their eyes, when they write about us, is the thing that perpetuates the stereotypes about us and marginalises even more!" (cited in Reed-Gilbert, 2000, p. 18). The relational discourse offers the potential for unlimited literary analysis and expanded cultural awareness by opening texts and the minds of researchers to voices and world views beyond those previously limited by an institutionalised hegemony of whiteness as described by Gergen & Gergen (2000) who assert that: "The intelligibility of our accounts of the world derive not from the world itself, but from our immersion within a tradition of cultural practices we inherit from previous generations" (p. 1026). This methodological framework was designed to overcome a subliminal racist consciousness inherited (in my instance) from literature, learning and previous generations.

This chapter has detailed the aim, objective and rationale for the research project. It has outlined the theoretical approach and described details of the step-by-step process for a methodological framework to establish a relational discourse for literary critique. Chapters three and four explore the major themes of negativity, displacement, and white

secrets of the colonial past through a cross-cultural literary critique and analysis of the chosen texts engaging with the voices of Indigenous writers, poets and critics as part of a relational discourse.

Chapter 3 This Land Belongs To No Man

Peace was yours, Australian man, with tribal laws you made,
Till white Colonials stole your peace with rape and murder raid
(from "The Dispossessed" by Oodgeroo Noonuccal).

3.1 Introduction

In this and the following chapter, I discuss the continued use of discourses that reinforce images which have led to negative perceptions and attitudes towards Indigenous people. The assumption that negative perceptions can be retained in the consciousness of a society is validated by the description of an image by John Berger (cited in Goldie, 1989) as: "a sight which has been recreated or reproduced. It is an appearance, or a set of appearances, which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance and preserved – for a few moments or a few centuries" (p. 4). The relational discourse (demonstrated in the previous chapter) to allow a balanced and cross-cultural method of literary critique by including the voices of Indigenous writers, poets and critics is adopted. This achieves a critique of the preservation of negative imagery and literary displacement of Aboriginal people in post-millennial texts from outside a strictly white lens.

3.2 Literary revelation of historical white secrets

The common thread that links all three non-Indigenous texts and calls for a cross-cultural critique is the revelation of white secrets from the colonial past and the representation of Aboriginal people within the narrative around those secrets. The fictional versions of past secrets within the chosen texts all present the same scene: the

killing of Aboriginal people; the burning of bodies; and the cover-up. In an interview, Grenville (cited in Koval, 2005) stated that she wanted to bring out that Australian history has secrets which have been hidden and "we sort of know they're there but we sort of don't want to look at them" (p. 4). *The Secret River* describes the unjust and violent killing of Aboriginal people that accompanied white settlement as part of those white secrets, but presents the attacks on Aboriginal people as somehow balanced and justified by a notion of response to attacks by Aboriginal people. Grenville (cited in Koval, 2005) further states that:

> I've tried to be very even-handed. There is a gruelling scene of a white man speared, and his slow agonising death, but there is also an equally horrible scene of a young Aboriginal boy whose entire clan has been poisoned by arsenic in their flour. So I have tried to say, look, it happened on both sides (p. 6).

These notions of even-handedness fail to acknowledge, however, the historical reality of 'the invasion', or the fact that most of the violent acts by Aboriginal people were in retaliation to acts contrary to Aboriginal lore by white settlers. Any intention of reparation in this text is completely undermined by any suggestion of fairness as there was (and is) no justification for the unrelenting violent actions of white settlers.

Replaying colonial confrontations through a fictional space produced from white Australian recorded history reproduces familiar scenes purely from the perspective of the coloniser. Lorraine Johnson-Riordan (2004) asserts that despite attempts to undermine the "Law of the (white European) Father", narrative structures that repeat familiar old

scenes still “serve the interests/investments of the white men who narrated…them” (p. 193). The chosen texts validate Johnson-Riordan’s assertion by serving the interests of the white authors via the popularity of the fictive-historical genre with the reading public.

The secret in *Journey to the Stone Country* is a massacre committed by Annabelle’s grandfather to gain possession of the land which is kept secret for two generations. This privileges the Beck family who benefit from uninterrupted ownership of the land and a consequent accumulation of wealth. This secret from the past in Miller’s text continues to inform actions in the present. After learning that her Grandfather was personally responsible for the killing of Aboriginal people, Annabelle doubts whether her relationship with Bo Rennie of the Jangga people can withstand such revelations (p. 349). Annabelle’s perception of the countryside of her childhood, after the scene Panya recounts, is reduced to that of a battlefield, which for her reduces the murders to scenes in an honourable battle (p. 353). However, these were not battles between equally matched foes. Raymond Evans (2003) provides evidence that:

> [I]t could have been as many as 50 to 1. A vast primary data bank presently being compiled at Griffith University now claims to trace around 10,000 violent Aboriginal frontier deaths with supportive documentation. That is. They are no longer a matter of mathematical projection or speculation. They can be known of…as most things in history are known, with relative certainty. Yet what can be projected from this new knowledge base is that the real death rate was possibly double this number (p. 73).

Bo's reassurance (which can only be seen as a projection of Miller's literary imagination) that "The old people done their share of killings too" works to undermine the violence and neutralise the atrocities (Miller, 2002, p. 360). Whilst respecting and applauding Miller's choice and motivation to bring the fact of 'secret' massacres of Aboriginal people to the eyes of post-millennial fiction, any intention of literary reparation is at once severely diminished. Literary repetition of disrespect and disdain in description of the character, Panya, the old Jangga woman who witnessed this massacre as a child, also works in a negative manner. Miller's grotesque images are an attack on the senses that indelibly etch an impression of revulsion in the reader's consciousness. Negative images of Panya and her life-world overpower the significance of the injustice revealed in Panya's powerful speech of accusation and retribution, and remain in the memory of the reader long after the book is closed and the speech forgotten:

> She brought up more loose phlegm and swallowed it…A skein of tacky saliva clung to her lips, dribbling onto her front. She swiped at it impatiently with the flat of her hand…Where are my sisters and brothers …I watched them being murdered! My mother and father too. Murdered in front of me…I been trying to think of a reason why you would bring Louis Beck's grand-daughter into old Panya's house. Or she just come here to look at old Panya?...Pretend to her friends she understand the old Jangga people now?...She sniffed back hard and spat, her hand going out in a direction-making gesture (Miller, 2002, pp.337-341).

In *The White Earth,* the major secret is the senseless shooting of the last men and boys of the Kuran people who escaped from the Reserve at Cherbourg each year to

perform a traditional ceremony on Country. One year, they accidentally frightened a small boy (John McIvor when a toddler) who had wandered away from a crowd of picnickers. His father, Daniel McIvor (who was also once an Aboriginal Police Scout) reacted violently by killing them all. This story unfolds after so much violence in general, that the reader is almost desensitised to the killings. The killing is paramount to the story, however, and informs many of the actions in the text's present. There is a culture of secrets woven through the ordinary lives of almost every character in McGahan's text, so it is not surprising, therefore, that shameful acts and atrocities are suppressed for generations. Mrs. Griffiths, the old housekeeper, reveals unwanted and unpalatable secrets to the boy William about his mother, Veronica, and her family, claiming they were:

> White trash…Not that I ever met your grandfather. A drinker, they said. And worse besides. The police knew him plenty…And Veronica – she was a dirty little thing…Took after her father too. How she wanted those pretty dresses in the shops. No wonder there was trouble. Stealing! But anyone could tell there was something not right about her, even back then. She was always a little touched (Miller, 2002, p. 115).

John McIvor has his own secrets: a secret water hole, a secret room, and visions of a fiery man who has haunted his dreams since he let his wife's father, Oliver, burn to death on the mountainside. In consequence of Oliver's death, John was able to marry Harriet and greatly benefit financially. The secret water hole is very significant in John's life. This is the place where he makes his vow to return and own the property one day

after he and his father are dismissed. He takes Harriet to the secret water hole and she becomes pregnant and, in consequence of the death of her father, is forced to marry John. Most significantly, it is the spot where the bones of the murdered Kuran men are hidden. William is sent on two secret missions to the water hole: on the first journey, he achieves a spiritual connection to the land through the bunyip who tells him *"The black men dreamt me, long ago"* (p. 316). On the second, he retrieves the hidden bones (which have been revealed by drought) unaware that his Uncle plans to permanently destroy them (pp. 364-365).

The Secret River, as might well be anticipated from the title, also contains a series of secrets revolving around the killing of Aboriginal people in relation to the settlement of the Hawkesbury River area. When Thornhill discovers a piece of land he wants on the river, it is months later before he tells Sal about his desire to own it and make their home there. When he does tell Sal, she responds that they should count their blessings; they have enough (Grenville, 2005, p. 109). The ongoing series of secrets that develops between Thornill and Sal expose the false personal values employed to justify silencing the unspeakable acts that Will eventually performs. Up to the discovery of the land, Sal has been complicit in Will's dishonesty and thievery, so it is not surprising that she eventually becomes complicit, through pretence and silence, in the killing of Aboriginal people which, in the end, Will takes part in (Grenville, 2005, pp. 53, 159, 324). In fact, Thornhill, not only participates in the massacre, but without his boat, the raid could not have occurred at all. This physical displacement of the Aboriginal population allowed Thornhill to claim more land without fear of obstruction and to become a wealthy and respected member of the community. In real life, a place has been named after the person

upon whom Thornhill was based, Solomon Wiseman of Wiseman's Ferry (Grenville, 2006, p. 3) where a statue stands proudly in his honour (see Figure 3.1).

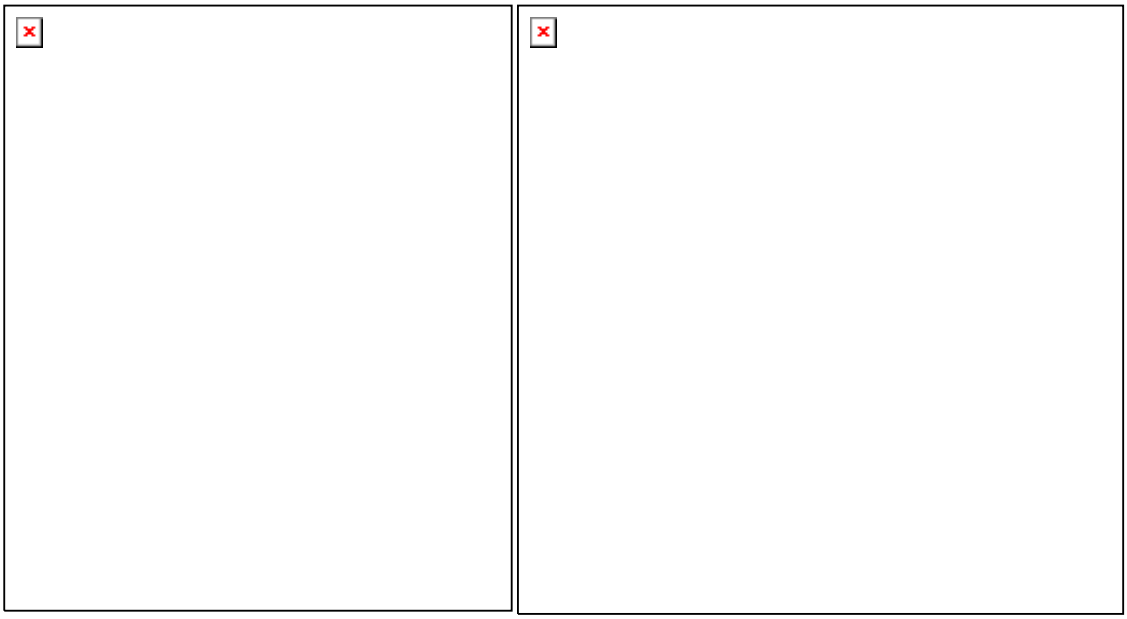

Figure 3.1 Statue of Solomon Wiseman and his home, Cobham Hall, now Wisemans Ferry Hotel

For readers of the fictive-historical genre, it is impossible to know which parts of Grenville's text, and/or the other two texts, are taken from authentic historical accounts and which parts have had a dramatic imagination unleashed on them as Clendinnen (2006) suggests; or "had flesh put on the bones" as Grenville states in her memoir (2006, p. 147).

Upon reflection of my 'learned' generational negative consciousness of Indigenous people, it is certain that (for this reader) the fear which was undoubtedly a motivating factor in Australia's white settlement history is revived through the images

invoked by these fictive-historical texts. Furthermore, without cultural awareness and personal interaction, a potential and power exists in post-millennial literature to revive literary images and memories which provoke unconscious perpetuation of negative perceptions and alienation of Aboriginal people.

The narrative of graphic re-enactments of the violence and injustice suffered by Indigenous people consequent upon the events at the heart of the white secrets shows no sensitivity in its portrayal of confrontations, especially when Grenville's book *The Secret River* (2005) is dedicated to *"the Aboriginal people of Australia: past, present and future"*. Perpetrators of such violence are not shown as suffering particular mental anguish from their actions. Thornhill is confused, but not regretful: "This bench, here, where he could overlook all his wealth and take his ease, should have been the reward. He could not understand why it did not feel like triumph" (Grenville, 2005, p. 334). These are the reflections of a privileged white man who has it all - land, wealth and prestige. In contrast, the voices of Indigenous writers, poets and critics included in the relational discourse use narrative to connect the memory of past violence to the ongoing injustice and emotional trauma suffered by Indigenous people today (Alice Nannup, 1992; Oodgeroo Noonuccal, 1970; Leah Purcell, 2002; Francis Rings, 2002; Alexis Wright, 2006).

3.3 A culture of displacement

Each of the chosen texts demonstrates that an ongoing sense of displacement is still prevalent within the narratives of non-Indigenous post-millennial literature. This is firmly rooted in a literary quest to obtain a place of belonging through possession of land.

Displacement is initially represented as part of the lives of the white protagonists, and in consequence of their history, white characters have no difficulty displacing other people. It is argued that such displacement (i.e. a loss of sense of belonging) lies at the heart of a socio-literary imagination that connects all three texts through themes of white displacement, land ownership, a sense of belonging, and reconciliation or reparation. This literary displacement has two aspects. In the first instance, the narratives show that white settlers who colonised Australia (whether by choice or as convicts) were displaced from England. It is in consequence of this immigration history that Moreton-Robinson (2003) argues that a position of "colonizer/migrant…based on the dispossession of the original owners of the land and the denial of [Indigenous] rights under international customary law" will always apply to descendants of non-Indigenous subjects, who will always remain an immigrant population (p. 23). In the second instance, the narrative shows the displacement of Aboriginal people by the actions of white settlers to obtain possession of the land and achieve a new sense of belonging.

3.4 Displacement of white characters

In *Journey to the Stone Age*, Annabelle is twice displaced. Firstly, she is displaced by her white heritage as the granddaughter of the displaced "pastoralist, pioneer, cattleman Louis Nicholas Beck, eldest son of Nicholas Louis and Marthe Annabelle Beck, from Haddon Hill in the green Vale of Taunton" (Miller, 2002, p. 348). Secondly, as an academic in Melbourne, Annabelle is displaced by her husband who abandons her for a younger woman. This second occasion begins as an emotional displacement: "She *felt* discarded, as something that is unclean and impure and is no longer worthy of respect. It was not his disgrace but hers, she knew that" (Miller, 2002, p. 4). However,

Annabelle's choice to flee soon makes it physical: "Tropical North Queensland. Thousands of kilometres from Melbourne. It was another country…she knew that in telephoning this woman [Susan Basset] she was telephoning another reality" (Miller, 2002, p. 9). A romantic relationship which develops in North Queensland quickly tempers her second displacement, both from her husband and Melbourne.

The culture of the iconic pioneering white settlers portrayed in the stoicism of Louis Beck, George Bigges and Iain Rennie are re-imagined in the venture of the Hearn family. Displaced by their white heritage, they are part of a new brigade laying further waste to the land. The Hearn's Station, Zig Zag, has "A raw look of newness and struggle…as if it had not yet achieved permanency and might be pulled down and towed away again at any time, leaving the wilderness to heal itself" (Miller, 2002, p. 128). Mathew Hearn demonstrates the ingrained "white know-alls" attitude described by Moreton-Robinson (2003a) in his self-assurance that he will overcome the wild bulls Bo tells him about, just as the pioneers overcame the obstacle of the Traditional Owners two centuries earlier (p. 127).

In *The White Earth,* William and his mother, Veronica, are displaced initially by their white heritage and secondly, from their property by the fire that kills William's father, leaving them penniless, homeless, and at the mercy of John McIvor, an elderly uncle. Veronica is characterised as incompetent and inadequate, either locked in her room not to be disturbed after taking headache or sleeping pills, or ill-treating her son mentally or physically (McGahan, 2004, p. 7). William senses there is:

> [S]omething fractured and brittle…at his mother's core…Headaches plagued her, and much of the time she was listless and exhausted. At other times she was wildly short-tempered, screaming weakly at William if he annoyed her, and stinging him with slaps (p.7).

Veronica is, I would argue, displaced from her husband, her home, her son and life itself disappearing on occasion "for up to a week. Resting, William's father would say, at a place where people went when they needed time away by themselves" (McGahan, 2004, p. 7). John McIvor is also twice displaced, firstly by his white heritage and secondly, as a young man when Elizabeth White dismisses him and his father, Daniel McIvor, from Kuran Downs:

> *You were only ever an employee, Mr. McIvor…Your son was only ever an employee. I think you might have forgotten that*…For John McIvor, banishment from Kuran Station was like an amputation. One moment he had been whole and young and full of hope. The next, a limb had been lopped away and the blood was draining out, leaving him cold and pinched. Elizabeth White had wielded an axe upon his life. (McGahan, 2004, pp. 55, 71)

Since early childhood, John McIvor has believed that Kuran Station was meant to belong to him owing to a sense of rightful ownership instilled in him by his father. He vows that he will return and "no matter how long it took, he would get the station back" (McGahan, 2004, p. 146).

Ruth McIvor is also twice displaced. Firstly, by her white heritage and, secondly, physically, and emotionally, when her father banishes her to boarding school after she is raped by Dudley, a family friend. Ruth's punishment, even though she is the victim, has significant consequences as the story unfolds (p. 224). After Dudley's death, John acquires his property, but the townsfolk believe he has cheated the dead man and John and Harriet become unpopular due to public opinion. Harriet becomes an outcast, socially displaced by these events and too embarrassed to leave the house (p. 245).

In *The Secret River,* the Thornhills arrive in Australia as displaced people from England. In fact, Will is a convict lucky to have escaped death. Initially, Will sees Australia as another prison. He contrasts the enormity and vast openness of the place with the smallness of man: "He was nothing more than a flea on the side of some enormous quiet creature" (Grenville, 2005, p. 4). His initial fear of being stuck in a place of no return only to be buried on alien soil is countered by the realisation that neither he nor his children would ever be socially accepted in England:

> No matter how much gold he might have about him, they [the English] would never trust a wherry or a prentice to a man who had been a guest of His Majesty. What was worse, he saw in that same airless moment that the children of a man with the taint would be tainted too. So would his children's, and his children's children. Their very name – Thornhill – would carry the taint (Grenville, 2005, p. 176).

When Blackwood introduces Will to the Hawkesbury, Will lets himself imagine "standing on the crest of that slope, looking down over his own place. Thornhill's Point. It was a piercing hunger in his guts: to own it. To say *mine,* in a way he had never been able to say *mine* of anything at all" (Grenville, 2005, p. 106). Blackwood explains his need to be away from "*Too many buggers… [who] never let a man forget that he's worn the broad arrow*" and shows Will where his place is, explaining all he does is "*Catch a few fish, grow a bit of corn, brew a bit of rotgut, I can please meself…Get your backside on a bit of ground, sit tight. That's all the asking you got to do"* (Grenville, 2005, pp. 105-106). Blackwood also tries to impress on Will that you have to "*Give a little, take a little, that's the only way…Otherwise you're dead as a flea*" (Grenville, 2005, p. 107). This point that he has to share the land with the Traditional Owners, however, is incomprehensible to Will who merely focuses on a "hunger in himself he had never known before" as he promises the piece of land "by himself, to himself" (Grenville, 2005, p. 108).

Despite suffering the mental and physical anguish of displacement, white characters have no compunction about displacing Aboriginal characters. This displacement is a consequence of the white settlers' need to overcome a personal sense of displacement by achieving a new sense of belonging through ownership of land. Thornhill's notion that "A person was entitled to draw any picture they fancied on the blank slate of this new place", indicates his ingrained ignorance and disregard of Aboriginal people (Grenville, 2005, p. 319). Like John McIvor in *The White Earth,* Thornhill's ownership of land and ultimate sense of belonging depends entirely on displacement of the Traditional Owners as evidenced in his narrative thoughts that: "The

more civilised folk set themselves up on their pieces of land, the more those other ones could be squeezed out. In exchange for the risk such men were willing to take, and the labour they were prepared to expend, a hundred acres of land seemed a fair thing" (Grenville, 2005, p. 121).

3.5 Displacement of Traditional Owners

In *Journey to the Stone Country,* Bo is the victim of a double displacement. Firstly, he is a descendant of the Jangga people displaced by Annabelle's grandfather Louis Beck and George Bigges. Secondly, on a personal level, his family is displaced from Verbena Station by a forgery perpetrated by Grandma Rennie's sister May, half owner of the station, and her nephew Jude Horrie who calls himself "Jude Rennie, taking his mother's maiden name so it would make him more one of the family and related to Iain Rennie [his white pastoralist grandfather]" (Miller, 2002, p. 254). May's actions in selling the property underhandedly by forging Grandma Rennie's signature, support negative (ingrained) perceptions of Aboriginal people as treacherous and unscrupulous (even amongst kin) confirming Moreton-Robinson's (2004) suggestion of the many "apparently uncomplicated representations [that] mask not only the complexity of Indigeneity but also their role as a set of differences that work to assist the constitution of whiteness as an epistemological *a priori* that informs one's ontology" (p. 76). It also stands as evidence of negative stereotypical representation in a post-millennial text undermining the opportunity for new and transformative dialogue.

Bo signifies a character caught between two worlds and has a confused identity. His Aboriginal heritage comes from his Grandma Rennie, matriarch of the family, and

although she is dead, her character realises a significant presence throughout the text. By adoption of the name bestowed by her, Bo shows a preference for his Aboriginal roots over the white heritage of his pastoralist grandfather, Ian Bain Rennie. In conflict with his Aboriginal heritage, possibly by the writer's design as a comparison of two world views, a reflection of Bo's white heritage occasionally surfaces. For example, he envisages cattle running on Ranna Downs where good pasture is going to waste and comments that: "I don't like to see good pasture empty of beasts" (Miller, 2002, p. 152). Annabelle's response: "That's just what my dad would have said", highlights Bo's dual heritage (Miller, 2002, p. 152).

Bo ultimately appears as an 'insider' to a non-Aboriginal reader. However, a cross-cultural reading witnesses a slight aloofness that lies within his characterisation which hints at a rift between him and his Aboriginal community. This comes to a head during the visit to Panya when she maligns him for his past escapades, accuses him of knowing about the massacre by Annabelle's grandfather, and of being a traitor to his people by bringing Annabelle to her door:

> Foul language and drinking. I heard all that from you…Bo Rennie always thought he was a smart packet. Drinking and chasing other men's women…You ever hear the story of them killings before, Bo Rennie?...No!...That's what he says! Some people don't find it too hard to lie to themselves…You got no sense…You not worth a spit of your old dad…You could have turned out like Les Marra but you never did. You could have done some good for your people…What did you

bring? That woman! A insult. Now you gonna insult the old people (Miller, 2002, pp. 336-340).

It appears that Panya, an Elder of the Jangga people, no longer accepts Bo Rennie as belonging to their community and her final summation of Bo's status vehemently proclaims his alienation:

> You gotta decide whether you a Jangga man or whether you one of them. She patted Arner's hand. This boy knows who he is. He gonna do something for the old people. He's ready for it. Now you get out of here. You no good to us. You go back to the coast. You don't belong out in this country no more. You belong with that woman and her friends. We don't need you here (Miller, 2002, p. 346).

Any sympathy that the writer has exhibited for the present effects of past violence on Aboriginal society vanishes, however, through Bo's suggestion that the way to reconciliation is to disregard Panya's advice: "You don't want to go listenin to that hatred stuff, Arner. If we don't all live together we gonna come unstuck again in the future just like we did in the past…All that thousand-year talk, that's nothing. You hear what I'm saying?" (Miller, 2002, pp. 359-361).

Evidence of the violent displacement of the Traditional Owners in *Journey to the Stone Country* (2002) is contained in a speech by Panya, repeated over and over:

> That Grandfather of hers (Annabelle's) hunted us in the moonlight. Louis Beck and his mate, George Bigges. Them two hunted our people all up through them

> bendee scrubs…When we was little children together me and her [Grandma Rennie] seen the killings…Her granddad was huntin our families up through them scrubs…Me and your Grandma was all curled up inside that carcass looking out through the old bull's skullholes watching them men murderin our people in the moonlight…Did I tell you this before? But maybe you forgot it already and you need telling again?" (Miller, 2002, pp. 338-341).

Annabelle's mind combines this new information with memories of all her visits to country-town museums where there was no mention of the Murris to recognise at once the displacement of Aboriginal people that had occurred across the nation:

> [T]he attendant…would tell her with a fatuous sincerity, Why, Miss, didn't you know? there were no Murris in this part of the country. For it was either tell her that or tell her the celebrated pioneering forebears of the district had been murderers and thieves. And that is what they must have been. For in truth there were no other means than murder by which they might have acquired their land (Miller, 2002, p. 349).

In McGahan's text, similar violent displacement is demonstrated in the killing of the Kuran men and boys when they return to perform a ceremony (as they do each year) in relation to Country. This ceremony and killing are attached to the secret water hole which is the resting place of charred bones which were dumped in the creek after damp ground prevented a fire from doing a thorough job of destroying the evidence (McGahan, 2004, p. 348). John McIvor's perceptions of past relationships between cultures were

established through the hearsay of previous generations: “My father told me all about them [Aboriginal people]. They used to get free blankets and flour. The Whites treated them damn well. Too well, if anything” (McGahan, 2004, p. 347).

Aboriginal writers Nannup (1992) and Wright (2006) provide an Aboriginal perspective of the effects of displacement both in an autobiographical and fictional format. These examples both evidence the ongoing memory of violence towards Aboriginal people as well as the manner in which it passes from generation to generation. Alice’s bitter memories of the 1920’s are those of a child, but her narrative explains how such memories become embedded in the consciousness of current generations:

> [A]t around half past five or six o’clock every morning there used to be these prisoners, Aborigines from Roebourne gaol, coming along all chained together by the neck…There would be about sixteen of them, eight on each side, and they’d all be walking in a line carrying a pick, shovel and water-bag. There would be a policeman at the front, and one at the back, and those chains around their necks…I’d sit there and cry for them because they were my people. They’d be treated that way just because they’d killed a bullock or something like that…It was so cruel, and I couldn’t get away from them…and it’s a story I’ve told my own kids time and time again (Nannup, 1992, p. 24).

Alexis Wright’s *Carpentaria* (2006) recalls through one of Norm Phantom’s tales the violence that occurred concurrently with the physical displacement of Aboriginal people:

> Paralysed with fear, dry-mouthed, his body remained stock still with his eye squashed against the rock. A pinhole view of the world collapsing in a kaleidoscope, of his parents, patches of bare body moving into view, blood spraying, men's trouser legs dripping with blood, sunlight flashing off knife blades, death screaming in his mother's voice, noise like thunder – bang, bang, bang, cracking sounds as the tongue of the whip flicked by (p.102).

Wright's narrative description of an attack on Aboriginal people is no less haunting than Panya's tale in Miller's text. However, even though Panya's revelations are disturbing for Annabelle, the writer empowers her to come to terms with them through the voice of her Aboriginal lover and companion Bo who "looked at her…and took her hand in his, something of apology in his gesture and of sorrow in his voice. 'Old Panya's just filled with hatred,' he said. 'She can't help herself. You don't want to blame her too much. She never had what Grandma had' " (Miller, 2002, pp. 359-360). In contrast, the example of Wright's fictionalisation demonstrates how stories keep alive the long memory of such injustice from one generation to the next.

3.6 Continuing literary displacement of Indigenous people

While non-Indigenous authors imagine Aboriginal displacement, they undermine its significance. In *Journey to the Stone Country* (2002) Arner is projected as the stereotypical epitome of an Aboriginal character even though he is displaced. He has a silent expression of detachment "as if he dreamed of another life" (p. 28). He follows Bo's white truck: "the steady beat of the bass thumping from the cabin, the fierce voice

of the black man crying forth his bitter desire for revenge" (Miller, 2002, p. 123). In *The White Earth* (2004), the Kuran people also remain displaced from their land. The text shows that Kuran Downs "once belonged to the Kuran people. No one knows how many of them there were either - but after a few decades of settlement, they numbered less than twenty" (p. 283). Ruth McIvor reiterates that "my father is lucky it happened that way, otherwise he might really have a Native Title claim to worry about' (McGahan, 2004, p. 283). Although she promised the Kuran women she would assist with a claim, she decides she will not assist them after all. Instead, the text ends as it begins with possession of the land passing through generations of white hands. In *The Secret River*, Grenville provides vivid narrative accounts of the violent displacement of Aboriginal people. Despite such displacement, nevertheless, Thornhill acknowledges that "In spite of everything, it seemed that the blacks were not going to disappear", but they are still displaced from their Country having "retreated to the reserve that the Governor had set aside at Sackville, and lived on what the Governor was pleased to provide" (Grenville, 2005, p. 327).

3.7 The obscurity of negative and stereotypical representations

Miller recognises different ontological perspectives in *Journey to the Stone Country* through the voice of his characters and the narrator, but these are often condemnatory of Aboriginal world views rather than understanding or accepting. Susan, for whom Annabelle agrees to work conducting a cultural survey, suggests that "The Murris don't work to whitefella schedules" (Miller, 2002, p. 15). Indigenous people still recall the penalties imposed for this cultural difference: "They [the rulers] said to us 'You have no work ethic so you shall work for nothing' and they indentured us and brought us

back in chains when we ran away from their cruelty" (Dodson, 2000, p. 267). Dodson's statement, together with Alice's story, demonstrates how white refusal to contemplate Aboriginal world views and the enforcement of white laws has resulted in the mistrust of generations.

Miller intentionally and dramatically contrasts the difference between the two lifestyles. On the one hand, Susan's need for speed on the road represents the fast pace of life in the white world. On the other hand, the text suggests the lackadaisical approach of Aboriginal communities in extended and political negotiations for mining is incompatible with the modern business world: "if the Japanese are still buying coal by the time everyone's approved it, the company will get down there and dig out its little seam of black gold", (Miller, 2002, p. 15). This vastly different and slower approach to decision making is presented negatively in Miller's juxtaposition of pace in the economy of today's business world.

The stereotypical characterisation of Trace in *Journey to the Stone Country* disregards a long-standing Indigenous voice raised in objection to the stereotypical image of Aboriginal women in literature as overly sensuous and promiscuous. Initially, Trace is portrayed as being on a quest for male attention:

> While she ate she leaned her elbows on the table and gazed around at the men. The men looked back at her and laughed and commented to each other. A man with his mate passing their table on his way out rapped her hardhat with his knuckles. 'How's it going there little sister?'…Yeah good here big brother,' the

> girl replied, laughing and looking quickly at Annabelle, her dark eyes alight with the danger of her uncertain quest (Miller, 2002, p. 56).

Through Annabelle, she is described as "the beautiful enigmatic maiden of all men's dreams" (Miller, 2002, p. 125). Narrative descriptions concentrate on her sensuality: "Trace smiled at Annabelle and gave a little shrug, the soft rounding of her shoulders and breast moulding the faded green cotton of her T-shirt" (Miller, 2002, p. 120). It comes as no surprise after such image-building that "Trace got herself a fine young man", in the character of Mathew Hearn, with the suggestion that there will soon be a child on the way (Miller, 2002, p. 333). The persistence of such representations continues to feed an established literary construction of the overly sensuous nature of Aboriginal girls. Such representations were originally due to the nudity practiced by Indigenous cultures and the lascivious nature of white males physically removed from the restraints and moral codes of their own culture (Behrendt, 2005) and have been enhanced and perpetuated since colonial times.

Behrendt (2005) outlines specifically the relationship between representations of Aboriginal femininity in the text *Coonardoo* (1929) and the misperceptions and mistreatment of Aboriginal women today, highlighting the intimate connection between literature and society:

> One example is Katherine Susannah Pritchard's novel, *Coonardoo*… I was horrified when I realised the implications of being called "Coonardoo," of the images and messages that were being placed upon me with the name…Colonial

> notions that Aboriginal women are ‘easy sexual sport’ have also contributed to the perception that incidents of sexual assault are the fault of Aboriginal women (p. 247).

Shoemaker (1989) advises that, while there were those readers who appreciated Prichard’s insight into traditional Aboriginal culture, the vast majority were outraged by the moral issues addressed in the narrative (p. 40). Furthermore, that at the time of publication, the text *Coonardoo* (1929) shocked readers by revealing the unfair and unjust treatment of Aboriginal women at the mercy of station owners and stockmen distanced from the expectations and watchful eyes and laws of white society (Shoemaker, 1989, pp. 38-39). Prichard’s fictional scenario became a perilous reality for many Aboriginal women and children in the Australian outback. A representation which depicts Aboriginal women as inviting seduction by the mere fact of their Aboriginality is pronounced in Prichard’s narrative in the scene where Geary forces himself on Coonardoo:

> Coonardoo could have moved past and away from him in the darkness. But she did not move. As weak and fascinated as a bird before a snake, she swayed there for Geary whom she had loathed and feared beyond any human being. Yet male to her female, she could not resist him. Her need of him was as great as the dry earth’s for rain (Prichard, 1929/1972, p. 203).

Over three decades after *Coonardoo* (1929), *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) by Patrick White, a fictitious story of the white account of survival of shipwrecked Eliza Fraser in

1836, added a deeper complexity to the misrepresentation of Aboriginal women by depicting them as having a degraded status within Aboriginal society: “Occasional morsels were thrown to the wretched females, who grovelled in keeping with their humble station, and scooped up the scraps, and shook off the dust before devouring them” (p. 221). *A Fringe of Leaves* stands as an important example in the history of Australian literature because, while Aboriginal Australians were granted citizenship in 1967, this clearly did not transpose as equality in the literary imagination or indeed the conscience of Australian society (Behrendt, 2002, p. 27).

Exploitation of Aboriginal women through literary misrepresentations as ‘different’, ‘profoundly sensual’, and of a lower status than men projects them as easy targets and has had an ongoing influence on the vulnerability and disrespect of Aboriginal women in reality. Behrendt (2005) claims that the misperceptions and mistreatment that Aboriginal women face today is a legacy perpetuated in literature through a colonial discourse:

> The ways in which stories in popular culture portray Aboriginal women – the stereotypes that are generated about us – can find their way into legal analysis in a way that sees those stereotypes reinforced and our rights unprotected. It is not just overtly racist literature that provides these examples; they can be just as prevalent in accounts that purport to be sympathetic to Indigenous women (p. 247).

The social impact of such representations is repeatedly raised by Aboriginal writers and poets who continue to highlight the reality of this problem outside a literary

context and collectively signal what society has ignored, which is the vulnerability of Aboriginal women in consequence of literary representations from the past and into the present. Barbara Nicholson's poem exposes the voice of unresolved anxiety and bitter memory that continues to raise a voice in contemporary Aboriginal poetry and society:

> 'You don't take that woman,' he cried, he yelled, he wailed
> At the men in the moleskin pants and cork-rimmed hats.
> 'Is not right marriage, is wrong skin, is not *your woman*.'
> But they didn't listen,
> Listen to the laws of this land,
> Didn't listen to aching hearts of warriors who knew and lived the ancient law,
> Didn't listen to the screaming
> And they beat her
> And they took her, they raped her, took the woman away.
> *Bastards* (cited in Reed-Gilbert, 2000, p. 25).

Alice Nannup's autobiographical narrative *When the Pelican Laughed* confirms the impact on Aboriginal girls and women of assumptions of their sexual willingness at the Moore River Mission between 1923 and 1932 when "most of the older girls that went out to work were pregnant when they came back in" (1992, p. 64), not, as portrayed in non-Indigenous fiction, through the overly sensuous nature of the girls. Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987) became the focal point of great contention and litigation for revelations concerning the paternity of her mother and grandmother (pp. 236-237). Oodgeroo

Noonuccal profoundly outlines white attitudes to the sexual mistreatment of Aboriginal women by white males in her poem *Dark Unmarried Mothers*:

> Dark unmarried mothers,
> Fair game for lechers –
> Bosses and station hands,
> And in the town and city
> Low-grade animals
> Prowl for safe prey.
>
> Shrug away the problem,
> The shame, the injustice;
> Turn a blind eye,
> Wash the hands like Pilate (1970, p. 8).

Despite such criticism, post-millennial texts continue these misrepresentations as *The Secret River* demonstrates in the scene with the woman that Smasher has chained up: "*Black velvet*, he said, his tongue flickering out around his lips. *Only kind of velvet a man's got round here"* (Grenville, 2005, p. 252). Regardless of the fact that the character who fulfils this stereotypical role is at the mercy of Smasher, who is characterised as a heinous and immoral individual, the licentious nature and Smasher's description of the sexual act: "*Black velvet…She did it with me and Sagitty*, he whispered. *Back and front like a couple a spoons"*, projects a false vision of mysteriousness and willing participation on the part of the woman (Grenville, 2005, p. 252). Narratives which depict

Aboriginal women as sexually provocative and promiscuous (albeit against their will) and surround them in language with terms such as 'black velvet' continue to reinvigorate the notion that Aboriginal women embody some form of mystical sensuality. In her text *Butterfly Song* (2005), Terri Janke highlights the currency of distasteful comparisons of contemporary Aboriginal women to Prichard's fictionalised character in a scene where the character, Tarena Shaw, is compared to the character Coonardoo: "So you're Aboriginal, like *Coon*ardo. She stresses the first syllable. She is looking at me, checking out my jeans, my belt and even my hair clip" (p. 72).

Miller's (2002) stereotypical representation of the sensuousness of Trace and her 'quest' to attract the attentions of men (p. 56) together with Grenville's (2005) references to 'black velvet' (p. 252), demonstrates the continuation of this familiar and damaging image in non-Indigenous post-millennial literature. Moreover, Miller's (2002) depiction of the 'last Stone woman', Panya, is also demeaning and disrespectful of Aboriginal women, but in a different way, which is no less harmful. An image of Panya is negatively juxtaposed with revolting images of her surroundings and a half dead dog, phlegm, excrement and blowflies. It does not enhance the plot, and all the reader takes away is a degraded image:

> An old woman sitting back on a sagged-down settee…Her eyes set deep in her head, reflecting the teevee, flickering in the darkness of her face. The skin of her features jowled and folded down over her cheeks, as if it would slough and leave the naked white bone of her skull…A grey dog stood shivering at the old woman's feet. It barked feebly a couple of times then lay down, whining and

> twisting around, licking and nipping at a deep ulcer on its back, the muscles and sinews of its hindquarters laid bare as a piece of butcher's meat. There was a strong smell of excrement. An open pail standing beside the settee. Blowflies humming around inside the pail, coming out and batting against the teevee screen, ricocheting off into the dark. …her speech half-stifled by an occlusion of phlegm in her throat, a cheesy mucous in the corners of her eyes. She coughed, gasping and choking and bringing phlegm into her mouth. She leaned forward and spat the gobbet of phlegm at the pail. It hit the side and slid down, the flies rising with a hum at the impact (pp. 334-337).

It is difficult to imagine that such a degrading literary representation could form part of any "underlying cultural truth" which Miller purports is the basis of his fiction (Miller, n.d.). The poem *Last of his Tribe* written by Oodgeroo Noonuccal demonstrates how a dignified image can be achieved without loss of contextual value or disrespect and insult to Indigenous characters:

> Old pinnaroo lonely and lost here,
> Last of your clan.
>
> All gone, all gone. And I feel
> The sudden sting of tears, Willie Mackenzie
> In the Salvation Army Home.
> Displaced person in your own country,
> Lonely in teeming city crowds,

Last of your tribe (Walker, 1970, p. 12).

Early in the narrative of *The Secret River* (2005), the colonial consciousness of fear of Aborigines is revived in Thornhill's sense of awareness and fear that his new prison "could hide a hundred black men with spears, a thousand, a whole continent full of men with spears and that grim line to their mouths" (p. 6). This initial representation stereotypes the image of an Aboriginal man with a spear as a threat to white settlers rather than a man hunting for food or for self protection. Will sees the spear as "part of him, an extension of his arm… Could make out chips of sharp stone in the end of the spear. It would rip its way in. Pulling it out would rip all over again" (Grenville, 2005, p. 5). In Thornhill's damnation, there is no thought that this land belongs to the Aboriginal man and that he, Will Thornhill, is indeed the trespasser: "*Damn your eyes be off,* he shouted. *Go to the devil!"* (Grenville, 2005, p. 5). The notion that the Aboriginal man is an uncivilised savage was already imprinted in Thornhill's consciousness.

Negative stereotypical representations are plentiful in Grenville's (2005) text. Aboriginal people are represented as "*poxy savages*" (p. 79); "the same as the ants or the flies, a hazard of the place to be dealt with" (p. 91); they are also "like the snakes or the spiders, not something that could be guarded against" (p. 93). Will speaks to the Aboriginal men "as to a couple of wary dogs" telling them "*You might as well bloody bark mate"* (Grenville, 2005, p. 144). Such comparisons confirm Goldie's (1989) assertion that negative stereotyping serves to reinforce the uniformity of ongoing semiotic control and power over the perception of an image (p. 6). The control and power over perception is further evidenced in Thornhill's wish that "he had thought to

bring…Beads. He had heard of beads being given to the blacks. Mirrors" (Grenville, 2005, p. 145). This demonstrates a literary re-presentation of the white arrogance and ignorance of Aboriginal culture that persists in over two centuries of Australian literature.

Such representations are at odds with any attempt to suggest to contemporary readers that although Aboriginal people have a different world view and cultural beliefs, they are no less intelligent or human than white people. This is hinted at in Dick's suggestion to his father that "*It's them savages. Planting them things* [yam daises] *like you would taters*" (Grenville, 2005, p. 141). However, the pathway of Thornhill's narrative thoughts forecloses any possibility for the transformation of his consciousness: "Thornhill stared at the patch of dirt…Dick would be right…except that everyone knew the blacks did not plant things. They wandered about, taking food as it came under their hand…like children, they did not plant today so that they could eat tomorrow. It was why they were called savages", (Grenville, 2005, p. 141). Thornhill's contemplation of comparison of Aboriginal culture and white life ends with negative judgments and criticism of an Aboriginal life-world without any comprehension of the reasons for difference or notion of the infallibility of his notion of savages (Grenville, 2005, p. 229). The obvious failure of the text to accommodate any attempt at enlightenment within Thornhill's consciousness of the humanness of Aboriginal people leaves the reader's literary imagination lingering within the pre-established colonial confines of the narrative.

3.8 Summary

The stepping off point for the theme of displacement in each text was based on the original displacement of the white protagonists. In each case such displacement culminated in a need for ownership which consequently led to the displacement, or compounded the displacement, of Indigenous people. In *Journey to the Stone Country,* Bo, Arner and Trace remain displaced by Annabelle's proposed ownership of Verbena (2002, p. 363). In *The White Earth*, the Kuran people remain displaced by the right of William, Ruth and Mrs. Griffiths to claim entitlements under John McIvor's will (2004, p. 375). In *The Secret River* (2005), the Traditional Owners of the Hawkesbury River area remain displaced by their incarceration on the Sackville Reserve with evidence of prior possession hidden under Thornhill's house where:

> the fish still swam in the rock. It was dark under the floorboards: the fish would never feel the sun again. It would not fade, as the others out in the forest were fading, with no black hands to re-draw them. It would remain as bright as the day the boards had been nailed down, but no longer alive, cut off from the trees and light that it had swum in (p. 316).

Behrendt (2006) suggests that Grenville used this passage about the foundations of Thornhill's house covering "the carved stone image of a large fish that was created during ceremonies performed by Aboriginal clans, who had lived in the area for thousands of years but have been pushed away, massacred or have died of illness" as a symbolic reminder of "the history that lies beneath our modern Australian state and of the ways in which that history has sometimes been deliberately suppressed to give the

impression of more noble beginnings" (p. 4). Whilst I agree with Behrendt's suggestion, I would also argue that it highlights generations of white indifference to Aboriginal possession and complacency towards the acrimonious nature of white ownership.

This notion of mental displacement is discussed in Chapter Four. It contains a detailed analysis of the literary representation of mental displacement of Indigenous people in conjunction with a white settler need for a deeper sense of belonging. Such belonging is achieved through the creation of a spiritual attachment to the land which functions not only to displace Indigenous people, but to override Indigenous possession.

Chapter 4 An Ongoing *Terra Nullius* Consciousness

…invisibility of the real because of a focus on the imagined creates a kind of psychological terra nullius, where, even though Aboriginal people are physically present, they are not seen **(Larissa Behrendt, "What lies beneath").**

4.1 Introduction

This chapter continues a cross-cultural critique of the chosen texts to identify instances of white ownership and white belonging in conjunction with and concurrent with the displacement of Indigenous people. The process involves a literary comparison between narrative passages of the chosen texts and the voices of Indigenous writers (as expressed in texts, critical works and poetry) to access literary expression of the lived experiences of Indigenous people.

4.2 Recognition of prior Aboriginal possession - but not sovereignty

All three narratives acknowledge a prior Aboriginal possession and the use of violence as a means of displacement. Despite such acknowledgement, however, there is a failure to demonstrate the emotional and social consequences of such displacement. Moreover, the texts reflect and reinforce the privileges of white settlers through ongoing white ownership. In *Journey to the Stone Country*, the prior possession of Aboriginal people lies at the heart of the white secret which forms the framework of the story and is acknowledged through references to the Ancestors and in the confrontation with the Jangga Elder, Panya. Panya's repeated descriptions of the brutal actions of Annabelle's grandfather in the murder of the Jangga people, especially women and children, to Bo

and Annabelle causes Annabelle to reflect on the decades of silence about the hidden secrets of pioneering families across the land. While Annabelle's contemplation recognises prior Aboriginal possession and the truth of settler crimes of the past, it contains no notion of Aboriginal sovereignty or restitution for the land; and no notion of what loss of access and use of the land meant for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture in the past, present or future:

> Had her father secretly known himself to be the son of a murderer and his beloved land the plunder of that crime? She had never thought of herself as the granddaughter of a murderer. The Becks, like all the others, had trusted to their silence about such things in the belief that their crime would eventually be forgotten…The truth was simple enough but nearly impossible to deal with (Miller, 2002, pp. 348-349).

Annabelle's own guilt and need to belong overcomes any notion of Aboriginal entitlement in consequence of such actions as is obvious in her claim that "It was not her country after all, but it was the nearest to any place she might lay a claim to" (Miller, 2002, p. 354). The purchase of Verbena Station by Annabelle for Bo will ultimately overcome her displacement by securing her childhood memories of belonging which Bo has enlivened, and cement her relationship and attachment to Bo.

In *The White Earth* the possession of Aboriginal people prior to white settlement is demonstrated by both John McIvor and his daughter Ruth. John McIvor tells his nephew William: "They [Aboriginal people] were here before us, after all, and they

survived for thousands of years. They understood a lot of things" (McGahan, 2004, p. 179). Ruth simultaneously highlights this prior possession: "[N]o one really *found* Kuran. And it wasn't empty. Other people were already here…A hundred and fifty years ago, the squatters came along and saw all that beautiful grass…So they marched on in" (McGahan, 2002, pp. 276-277). Despite this recognition, however, at the end of the text Ruth's reflections privilege white ownership with no recognition of Aboriginal entitlement: "[I]f anyone from Cherbourg really wanted the place, they would have to lodge their claim, along with everybody else. It was fifteen thousand acres of prime grazing country. In this world, something like that wasn't just given back. It had to be fought for" (McGahan, 2002, p. 375).

The White Earth highlights white settler fear of Aboriginal people together with notions of the necessity to protect white secrets of the past. In real terms, introduction of the Native Title Legislation revived racial tension and resentment against Aboriginal people through its validation of colonisation as a history of dispossession (Attwood, 2005, p. 251). McGahan (2004) captures the widespread fear based on false threats of loss of land which was caused by the media in the scene where Terry Butterworth suggests using the newspaper and TV at the rally on Kuran Downs to "ram the point home…refuse to accept Native Title", and gain a following through protests and blockades:

> They'd love it – a struggling farmer and his family, terrified of being kicked off their land, land they've worked for generations. And in the meantime we're screaming at the cameras – You could be next! The government is lying! Your

> back yards aren't safe! Your parks aren't safe, your beaches and your rivers aren't safe! Native Title will steal the lot!...Black hordes invading white family's home, that sort of thing (p. 188).

The following speech by the Opposition frontbencher Ian McLachlan, demonstrates how this fear and prejudice in relation to the proposed legislation was not just a narrative ploy adopted by McGahan for the benefit of his story, but was an idea disseminated from the highest levels of government:

> Mabo directly threatens the unity of Australia. It brings in a separate law for one group of Australians. It encourages aboriginal Australians to think of themselves as separate and distinct from their fellow citizens. It promises racial tension. It guarantees economic stagnation. I call on you to stand up for the ideals of federation – one nation – one continent; one law, one people, one destiny (cited in Wadham, 2002, p. 219).

This fear of dispossession by non-Indigenous land owners was unjustified, however, because instead of recognising Indigenous sovereignty, the Act actually legalised a transformation from displacement of Indigenous people to dispossession. Examination of Moreton-Robinson's (2003) summation of the *Native Title Act (1993)* reveals the affect of that distinction on any claims to be made by Indigenous people:

> The decision affirms the nation state's sovereignty by creating in law a hybrid of settlement that diminishes but does not erase Terra Nullius…The legal regime has

reproduced the doctrine of Terra Nullius in order to give place and a sense of belonging to itself and its citizens" (Moreton-Robinson, 2003, pp. 35-36).

This position is replicated in contemporary novels that undermine the rights of Indigenous Australians by recognising prior Indigenous possession, but refusing to acknowledge Indigenous sovereignty.

A misunderstanding of the nature of Indigenous possession results in misrepresentation in fiction. For example, at the rally on Kuran voices yelled that "they'll only ruin it anyway, they don't know how to run a property, they never did anything with this country" (McGahan, 2004, p. 211). This stance is also reiterated in *The Secret River* (2005) when Sal wants to pack up and leave and Will counters her suggestion with the argument that there is "*No call to give up on account of a few savages...They ain't never done a hand's turn…They got no rights to any of this place. No more than a sparrow"* (pp. 288, 290). Such assessments focus solely on white Western world views of the use of land and deny any possibility, legal or moral, for different cultural practices, thereby witnessing a complete disregard for the complexities of Indigenous cultures and land rights.

In *The Secret River* (2005), Will's recognition of the long possession of Aboriginal people is apparent in his discovery of the carving of the fish and boat in the rock:

> It came to him that this might look an empty place, but a man who had walked the length of that fish, seen the tiller and sail of the *Hope* laid down in stone, had to recognise otherwise. This place was no more empty than a parlour in London, from which the master of the house had just stepped into the bedroom. He might not be seen, but he was there (p. 155).

Grenville (2005) foregrounds and defines the fact that Thornhill does not acknowledge this as Aboriginal sovereignty: "There were no signs that the blacks felt the place belonged to them. They had no fences that said *this is mine.* No house that said, *this is our home.* There were no fields or flocks that said, *we have put the labour of our hands into this place"* (p. 93). Although Will hides this evidence of possession from Sal, she nevertheless comes to her own realisation on witnessing the deserted camp:

> *They was here,* Sal said. Seeing the place had made it real to her in a way it had not been before. She turned to Thornhill. *Like you and me was in London. Just the exact same way…You never told me,* she whispered. *You never said…They was here,* she said again. *Their grannies and their great grannies. All along* (Grenville, 2005, p. 288).

Oodgeroo Noonuccal proclaims the timeless relationship that Aboriginal people have with the land from which fictional projections displace them:

> Was it yesterday
> Or a thousand years,

My eager feet

Caressed your paths;

My opened fingers

Counted grains of sand

Hidden in the warmth of time. (1970, p. 87)

Furthermore, a short poem by Aboriginal poet Kevin Gilbert (cited in Williams, 1996) clearly defines the unchanging nature of Aboriginal sovereignty in the past, present and future:

I am the land

I am the tree

I am the spirit

You can't conquer me (p.8).

4.3 The quest for white ownership

In *Journey to the Stone Country,* Annabelle may be initially displaced from her husband and life in Melbourne, but at the end of the text, she belongs to "The landscape of the Suttor. The secret region of her heart that she had never shared with Steven but which she had shared with this man [Bo] all her life" (Miller, 2002, p. 363). Her belonging is linked to Bo: "For the moment it was enough to be together in this place [Verbena]" (Miller, 2002, p. 364). In light of Bo's intention to regain possession of Verbena, Annabelle's intention to buy the property is ambiguous. It could be seen as a reparative gesture for her grandfather's misdeeds; a desire to secure her relationship with

Bo; or a desire to own land on the Suttor to which she has become re-attached (Miller, 2002, p. 126). Regardless, by taking action which serves her emotional welfare, Annabelle evidences retention of white ownership and control as opposed to permitting self-determination for Bo, Arner and Trace. While this may seem meaningless in the literary context of a romance novel, it places this text within a larger deficit discourse which reflects the power and privileges of the dominant culture, undermining Aboriginal self-determination. This power struggle becomes apparent in Behrendt's (2002) suggestion that: "it is only through completing the journey to full self-determination that true indigenous liberation can be achieved" (p. 24).

In *The White Earth*, a quest ensues for ownership of Kuran Downs. The Traditional Owners, the Kuran people, have no specific character representation and are only given voice through Ruth, a white woman. The text focuses on John McIvor, for whom ownership of Kuran represents the fulfilment of a dream and his father's promise that Kuran would be his: "His father never spoke of it directly, but the understanding was there, in Daniel's every look and word…John grew up secretly believing that Kuran Station would one day be his" (McGahan, 2004, p. 27). Owning Kuran included the right to belong to a different class of society and Daniel devoted himself to this plan nurturing in his son's mind the myth that Kuran Downs was his birthright. John, in turn, wanted "his children to grow up on the station. Surely his daughter deserved as much as Elizabeth White…what more fitting proof could there be that the station had been his by right all along?" (McGahan, 2004, p.192).

John's myth was shattered when he was shunned by Elizabeth White who wanted nothing to do with him as a marital prospect because he was beneath her station. He recalls the dismissal of himself and his father when she sold the property: "It was finished, all in a matter of minutes…not one word of protest as his inheritance was ripped away from him" (McGahan, 2004, p. 55). In turn, John devoted his life to obtaining ownership of Kuran convinced that it was for the sake of his only child, Ruth:

> How was he to make her understand that all the grandness and stature of Kuran Station was ready for her now – that the whole life he'd always planned for her was ready. The picture of it was so clear in John's mind. With the station behind her, she could have her pick of the finest suitors in the country, she could find someone influential and rich, from a landed background maybe. The House would be hers and her husband's to live in, restored to its former glory. And when they had children of their own, the kids could be raised there on the property. Kuran Station would become a family seat once again, the foundation of a new dynasty, eclipsing even the Whites. And there at the head of family, the great patriarch, would be John himself (McGahan, 2004, p. 267).

Because Ruth is estranged from her father, when the prospect of a new heir presents itself, John seizes on the opportunity to nurture William, his nephew, as a replacement (McGahan, 2004, p. 85). Although William does not like the house when he first arrives, he soon becomes enticed by it: "amidst his fears and shame…he felt an odd sensation of expansion. It was the House, calling to him" (McGahan, 2004, p. 117). He envisages chandeliers and great fireplaces and himself "as an adult, a man, moving

through those golden hallways. Tall and assured and invulnerable…His own House" (McGahan, 2004, p. 117). Entranced by the property like his uncle, William also reflects on the sense of power achieved through ownership:

> [A]s if ownership was something that enlarged the veins and enriched the blood…there was Kuran Station as well…native and alive and half wild…He had felt the reality of it, earth and rock swelling beneath his feet, he had smelled it, and listened to the silence of it. If it was his, he would be able to walk the hills…knowing them, having learnt all the stories and secrets that there were to learn, a master of wisdom inaccessible to anyone else. The owner of that! The certainty of that!...He *did* want the station (McGahan, 2004, p. 117).

Despite displays of the intensity of feelings of ownership, or loss thereof, on the part of white characters in the non-Indigenous texts, any suggestion of similar feelings on suffering displacement on the part of Aboriginal people are excluded. The property in *The Secret River,* originally one hundred acres called Thornhill's Point after the first white owner, is expanded to three hundred acres after a violent dispersal of Aboriginal people to ensure no further interference (Grenville, 2005, p. 314). Thornhill becomes very wealthy and constructs a grand homestead, Cobham Hall, the envy of the Hawkesbury, so grand it afforded him the reputation of royalty:

> For the newcomers, William Thornhill was something of a king. When he was not on the river, he sat on his verandah, watching with his telescope everything that went by on the river. His wife had become something of a queen, celebrated

> for her Christmas entertainments, complete with Chinese lanterns and string bands (Grenville, 2005, p. 314).

Thornhill's desire for the Traditional Owners to be out of sight and out of mind - physically and mentally displaced is evident: *"Youse lot best bugger off…Best stay away out of it…Out of our place…This mine now. Thornhill's place…You got all the rest…You got the whole blessed rest of it, mate, and welcome to it"* (Grenville, 2005, pp. 194, 196). Moreton-Robinson's (2007) description of Aboriginal sovereignty exposes the impossibility of dispossession of Aboriginal people and the false premise of its embodiment in any fictional suggestion of white ownership:

> Our sovereignty is embodied, it is ontological (our being) and epistemological (our way of knowing), and is grounded with complex relations derived from the intersubstantiation of ancestral beings, humans and land. In this sense, our sovereignty is carried by the body and differs from Western constructions of sovereignty, which are predicated on the social contract model, the idea of a unified supreme authority, territorial integrity and individual rights (p. 2).

Cobham Hall is projected as Will and Sal's reward after a long and arduous journey:

> Looking down at his estate it was possible to imagine it a version of England…Foursquare, immovable, it was like a stately chord of music in this rumpled land. This was what he had worked for. He had lain awake planning, had

> burst his heart rowing and carrying, and here it was, given to him like the Madeira: the good life (Grenville, 2005, p. 330).

In light of the current privileges enjoyed by the majority of readers, however, the projection of Thornhill's ownership as "a fair thing" for the trials and tribulations suffered in the process of settling the land undermines any probability of reader perception of Aboriginal sovereignty (Grenville, 2005, p. 121). Although Thornhill's sense of achievement is tempered by his failure to feel triumphant (Grenville, 2005, p. 334), his characterisation, nevertheless, remains a reflection of power and privilege:

> As each day ended he sat in his favourite spot on the verandah, spy-glass in his hand, watching the sunset glow red and gold on the cliffs…the black shadow of the hill behind him – his own hill – move down across the garden (Grenville, 2005, p. 332).

4.4 The need for a sense of belonging

Within each of the chosen texts, the pastoral properties assume significance equal to that of the main characters. The properties: Verbena, Kuran Downs and Thornhill's Point, serve as the centrepiece of a quest for belonging satiated only through Aboriginal displacement and white ownership.

In *Journey to the Stone* Country, Verbena is to be the final destination for Annabelle. Her purchase of this property not only cements her relationship with Bo, but offers a reparative escape from the violent misdeeds and silences of her family, as

proclaimed in Panya's accusations (Miller, 2002, pp. 336-340). In *The White Earth*, Ruth initially expresses a dislike of Kuran telling William: "I know you've been told how wonderful Kuran and its history is. But I really don't like the place" (McGahan, 2004, p. 279). At the end of the text, however, a sense of belonging to Kuran Downs has been re-awakened together with a desire for ownership:

> Ruth could dispute William's claim, if she wanted, and inherit the property herself. And perhaps she should really do it. But the thought roused no feelings in her…She remembered the women from Cherbourg…as she talked eagerly of leases and land and rights… It was fifteen thousand acres of prime grazing country. In this world, something like that wasn't just given back… It had to be fought for… Was he [William] her responsibility now?...She glanced once more at the rain against the windows. A memory came. The smell of earth, and of wheat, and the feeling of a familiar hand upon her head, rough with calluses, and so strong…Ruth fought the tears…Then she returned to the chair, and the long vigil of the night (McGahan, 2004, p. 376).

Ruth's memories of belonging, enlivened through her senses, signal her reconnection with childhood and with the land (McGahan, 2004, p. 376). Furthermore, her return to the chair to watch over William signals her intention to fight for Kuran Downs (McGahan, 2004, p. 375). Whether this fight is for her or as William's guardian remains ambiguous and left for the reader to decide. In either case, her newfound sense of belonging, like Annabelle's in *Journey to the Stone Country*, is based on childhood memories. Thornhill's sense of belonging also reflects on his childhood. The bench

which he had specially made for Cobham Hall on which he sits “felt at times like a punishment…He had never forgotten the narrow bench… where William Thornhill had sat with dread in his heart to see whether he could become an apprentice. That bench had been part of the penance a boy paid for the chance at survival” (Grenville, 2005, pp. 333-334). Just as that bench was part of the penance of the boy William Thornhill for a chance in life, his bench at Cobham Hall reflects the penance of the man Thornhill for the actions he undertook to be in a position to “overlook all his wealth and take his ease” (Grenville, 2005, p. 334). While literary representation of the ‘bench’ may have been meant to portray an act of attrition, it also reduces and justifies the killing of Aboriginal people to that of an unquestionable action in the struggle for survival. Sal is complicit in Thornhill’s actions by condoning silence as a moral sanction:

> *I hope you ain’t done nothing,* she said at last. *On account of me pushing at you.* He could hear her recoiling from the words even as she spoke…*Here, Will, give your hands a wash,* she said. Her voice was ordinary enough, but she would not look into his face…He felt her watching them [his hands] as if they were her own. She still did not look at his face, even when he took the towel from her, even when she dished him out a plate of stew (Grenville, 2005, pp. 323-324).

Neither Thornhill nor Sal exhibits any notion of reparation. Thornhill’s offer to Jack of a blanket and food is merely to appease his own conscience. On Jack’s refusal, Thornhill responds angrily:

> Bu*gger you then, Jack, you can bleeding well starve and good luck to you!* He tramped away up the track without looking back. He had done more than a man was obliged to. Could have shot him, the way other men would have, or had him whipped, or set the dogs on him. It was out of his hands. If that blackfeller was hungry, well, it was no fault of William Thornhill's (Grenville, 2005, p. 330).

Indulgence in this literary space of complicity with knowledge of injustice and no mention of reparation is a literary act of mental displacement of Aboriginal people which anesthetises and soothes white consciences as aptly described by Grenville in regard to the Thornhills: "[I]t was a space they both inhabited. But it seemed there was no way to speak into that silent place. Their lives had slowly grown around it, the way the roots of a river-fig grew around a rock" (Grenville, 2005, p. 325).

In poetic expression

Living History

Our history lies in tatters
torn from the pages of time
as worthless as its paper
with civilized blue lines.

We now stand stark naked
lost and undefined
waiting for tomorrow
on a slow and changing tide.

We've naught to do but ponder
while deep inside we weep
and contemplate the magnitude
of what we've sewn, and reap.

4.5 Search for a spiritual connection

Each of the chosen texts evidences an awareness of the ancestral connection of Aboriginal people with the land, but stops short of expressing an understanding of the deeper significance of such connection. Moreover, there is a struggle within each of the texts to achieve a spiritual connection through adoption of a connection sustained by being 'of the land' as opposed to a white belonging 'on the land'. This literary struggle attempts to mimic the deep ancestral spiritual connection to the land of Aboriginal people through an interaction between the owner of the land and some form of spirit of the land; or through adopting knowledge of the Ancestors as a form of spiritual attachment. These literary scenarios, whether predicated on interaction with Aboriginal ancestral spirits or adoption of knowledge of these spirits, fail to achieve anything more than a sense of belonging rooted in white ownership of land, or what Moreton-Robinson (2003) describes as a "right to be here… ownership and authority, by virtue of their legal and social status as white immigrants…reinforced institutionally and socially" (p. 26).

In *Journey to the Stone Country* (2003), representations of Arner illustrate the deep spiritual connection unattainable by migrant Australians through examples of his special ability to communicate with the 'old people', a link which Bo recounts he first saw in Panya then in Dougald, who "give the knack of it to that boy of his, Arner. He's got it, that boy. There's some direct thing from the old people in him. You can feel it. He's not with us fellers" (Miller, 2002, p. 115). Annabelle reflects on how: "[C]utting the steak required from him the orderly procedure of a priestly office…The smoky morning of the room setting highlights to the bronze at his temples and cheekbones", acknowledging the embodiment of higher powers (Miller, 2002, p. 120). He is described

as “grave and beautiful, like a dark prince in the grand and solitary expectation of his isolation, awaiting the death of the king when he will come at last into the inheritance of his kingdom” (Miller, 2002, p. 29). At one point, as Bo approaches the truck he finds Arner gazing through the windscreen “golden in the wash of sunlight; modest, serene, enigmatic and beautiful, as if he possessed a thousand years and more and might await the moment of his destiny without the anxiety of time” (Miller, 2002, p. 54).

These descriptions of Arner all bear out Peter Pierce’s (2004) summation that “Throughout the novel he [Arner] stands for a frustrating, as yet unfulfilled, Aboriginal future” (p. 309). Whether this future encompasses a place for white Australia within the context of Aboriginal consciousness in the text remains ambiguous considering Panya’s desire for revenge:

> Arner’s great bulk beside her in the teevee light like a carved effigy. Her demon companion. Still and sombre, drugged by the airless stench and the effulgent light of the screen, the soft caresses of the old woman, his eyelids drooping. He might have arrived at his destination (Miller, 2002, p. 336).

On the other hand, Arner’s meeting of minds with Panya could merely signify her recognition of his connection with the Ancestors. Bo has already told Annabelle that he is going to take Arner “out there to Verbena to see the playgrounds” because, he says: “That boy’s gotta see where his people come from” (Miller, 2002, p. 248). This suggestion could also signify that a reuniting with Country would fulfil his Aboriginal destiny. This latter reading is substantiated by Annabelle’s realisation at the end of the text that: “she

could not hear the thump of Arner's music" (Miller, 2002, p. 364). The turning off of this false beat on arrival at Verbena, his Country, leads the reader to believe that Arner finds some form of peace. Nevertheless, the status of his dispossession remains intact along with Bo and Trace, in view of the fact that Verbena will soon be owned by Annabelle, a white woman.

The aesthetic and intellectual awareness that Annabelle believes she has of the Burranbah stone, which she found and removed, represents the attempt in Miller's text to create the spiritual connection of a white character. The significance of the stone as more than merely an artefact is confirmed in Dougald's response: "I probably shouldn't even be looking at it" (Miller, 2002, p. 71). Annabelle is "impressed by its unexpected weight…The stone was not simply heavy. There was, she decided a *gravitas* in the weight of it" (Miller, 2002, p. 72). She presumes a connection through understanding its significance beyond mere weight as a piece of art:

> There was a satisfaction in the thought that the form and weight of the stone were related in a subtle aesthetic balance. She realised that the maker of the stone could have arrived at such a balance only by a conscious exercise of the highest level of aesthetic craftsmanship. In other words, the stone was a work of art. It was a sculpture…She was convinced she had understood something true and significant about the stone, something that the person who had made it would have been pleased to have her acknowledge and would themselves have understood. She felt the gravitas of her own intelligence conveyed to the creator of the grave and beautiful stone (Miller, 2002, pp. 72-73).

In *The White Earth* (2005), John McIvor's characteristics and story begin with an emotional connection to Kuran, which is supported throughout by his knowledge of the land and a spiritual connection (p. 146). After his dismissal from the property as a young man, he expresses his determination to get the station back:

> [S]tanding there, John felt a sudden merging of two inner parts of himself, his childhood and his adult life, the station and the mountains. They all came together here in this spot [the secret pool]…It was as if the land was speaking to him directly, pulsing up through the stone at his feet. He *belonged* here. Not in the mountains or on the plains or in the towns, but here, on this one piece of country. It was the focus around which he had always circled. And look how it had suffered in his absence. As he suffered himself, incomplete, and doomed to be so, unless he returned. And in that moment, he knew. It was no pleasant fantasy or hope, it was an utter conviction, an acceptance of truth – no matter how long it took, he would get the station back (McGahan, 2004, p. 146).

The secret pool is also where John first makes love to Harriet: "He longed for her as if she was the crowning symbol of everything that had just been revealed to him, everything that in the future would be his" (McGahan, 2004, p. 147). He explains to William that his connection to the land is magical like that of Aboriginal people, just a different kind of magic, insisting that he too deserves respect:

> They think that the blacks have some magical connection that whites can never have…that we don't understand the country, that we just want to exploit it. But

> that's not true. We can have connections with the land too, our own kind of magic. This land talks to me. It doesn't care what colour I am, all that matters is that I'm here. And I understand what it says, just as well as anyone before me, black or white (McGahan, 2004, p. 181).

William decides that knowledge is the basis of ownership:

> Knowledge was the essence of ownership. The black men, it seemed, had held the knowledge when they had owned the land. His uncle held it now. And when William had the knowledge, when he knew everything about the station there was to know, he too would be ready to be own[er] in his turn (McGahan, 2004, p. 181).

John McIvor believes though that his attachment is more than just knowledge of the land. He believes that he has a relationship with the spirits of Kuran: "[I]n his hour of greatest need, the hills of his station [Kuran] had ignited by themselves…and so devoured his enemy [Oliver]", the death of whom became the basis of his wealth (McGahan, 2004, p. 171). After this event, John is beleaguered with nightmares about a 'fiery man', a vision that William comes to share after the rally:

> [S]omething came to William out of the night…Something, William was certain, that trod the night even when there was no one else there…it was a man *on* fire. And yet the figure didn't scream or struggle, but stood perfectly still. William could discern arms and legs wrapped in flame, a torso that streamed silent fire.

> And a head, tilted calmly to one side, as if to ask a question while it burned (McGahan, 2004, pp. 214-215).

When William tells John about this vision, John is relieved that William has "assumed the burden, and he is free of it at last" (McGahan, 2004, p. 341). However, on William's secret midnight trek to the waterfall, he has a much more meaningful encounter. He discovers a: "patch of scrub…where something invisible had made the air too potent to breathe…A presence dwelt there, some cold and ancient secret of the land itself, faceless, but imbuing the very trees and grass with dreadful meaning" (McGahan, 2004, p. 326). A creature explodes into his mind with horrible visions of the past telling him: *"This is the place, child…Old things still wait. In the special places"* (McGahan, 2004, p. 316). This vision provides William, two generations removed from his Uncle, with an even deeper spiritual awareness and William is convinced after this encounter that he, not his Uncle, holds the key to the land. He realises that his uncle's knowledge of the land, which was the basis of his knowledge, is faulty:

> Were they all a lie? The beings William had met in the hills – they were not the figures of which his uncle had spoken…They were from a different history altogether…harsh and ugly…if Kuran Station was none of those things William had been taught, if the truth was thirst and heat and twisted ghosts, then Ruth was right, and the inheritance was no gift. It was a burden (McGahan, 2004, p. 327).

McGahan (2004) predicates a deeper connection to the land on William in his realisation that:

> It stood guard here…and had done so for thousands of years…More images pervaded William's mind, a confusing rush of violence that he could not grasp…Dread flooded into him, for he understood now that he had been called here for a purpose. He could feel an old rage within the creature, a long patience that was nearly at an end (p. 317).

This mythical bunyip encapsulates time and energy into an abstract or metaphysical representation of the spirits of the land to highlight violent atrocities of the past and demonstrate Aboriginal belonging in the land itself: "*The black men dreamt me, long ago*" (McGahan, 2004, p. 316). The visitation of this spiritual consciousness upon William signifies that he has been imbued with the oldest and deepest knowledge of the land: "The monster nodded its huge head. *You bear the mark, boy*" (McGahan, 2004, p. 317). This introduces in literature the presumption of white people being able to achieve a spiritual connection through the Aboriginal Ancestors. William, who is intended as the next heir, now has a spiritual connection to the source of knowledge of the land.

This literary failure to recognise or respect the difference between an Aboriginal ontology and a white Western world view are also evidenced in Grenville's novel wherein Thornhill's ownership forms the basis of a physical and spiritual attachment: "This sky, those cliffs, that river were no longer the means by which he might return to some other place. This was where he was: not just in body, but in soul as well" (Grenville, 2005, p. 289). While Thornhill's soul is not connected to Aboriginal Ancestors, it is nonetheless a spiritual attachment. Grenville demonstrates through her

characters, however, that there is a difference between white ownership and an Aboriginal connection to the land:

> Thornhill felt a pang. No man had worked harder than he had done…But there was emptiness as he watched Jack's hand caressing the dirt. This was something he did not have: a place that was part of his flesh and spirit. There was no part of the world he would keep coming back to, the way Jack did, just to feel it under him (2005, p. 329).

Moreton-Robinson's (2003) assertion that Aboriginality is linked ontologically to land through a subject position which makes the land constitutive of Aboriginal people, a position "which cannot be shared, with the post-colonial subject whose sense of belonging in this place is tied to migrancy" (p. 31) demonstrates the emptiness prevalent in the basis of the literary projection of Thornhill's ignorance.

Thornhill's initial fear that: "He would die here under these alien stars, his bones rot in this cold earth" is appeased by his new sense of belonging (Grenville, 2005, p. 4). Although Sal no longer wishes to return home to England, she asks Thornhill to: "*Bury me here when I go… So I can feel the leaves fall on me*" (Grenville, 2005, pp. 320). It must be noted that these leaves fall not from Australian natives, but from the surviving "poplars for homesick ladies…the only poplars on this continent" which her husband had bought for her (Grenville, 2005, pp. 319-320).

4.6 An enduring reflection of whiteness

Despite some attempt to come to terms with historical injustices through history and literary discourses, many accounts in novels (including post-millennial prizewinning novels) revisit conventional colonial parameters in representation of such injustices. In *Journey to the Stone Country* (2002), regardless of Panya's predictions that "Les Marra and my Arner here, they gonna fight this war for another thousand years" and Annabelle's acknowledgment that "the truth of Panya's indictment lay behind the decades of her own family's silence", a reflection of enduring white ownership remains prevalent in Annabelle's summation: "Dispute settled! My land now! Without benefit of law. Lease in perpetuity" (pp. 345-347). Moreover, although it is Bo who wants to gain possession of Verbena, Annabelle's white privileges are reflected in her intention and ability to purchase the property (Miller, 2002, p. 363).

Each of the texts begins with initial white displacement, and all three ultimately culminate with an image that overwhelmingly reflects white ownership. *Journey to the Stone Country* begins with Annabelle becoming displaced by her husband from her life in Melbourne and ends with her plans to purchase Verbena. In *The White Earth,* William is displaced from his farm by the death of his father, but ends in a position to claim Kuran Downs for himself by virtue of his Uncle's will. In *The Secret River,* Thornhill, who is a convicted and self confessed thief, and Sal his wife, are displaced from England by being transported to Australia, but end as the most successful settlers on the Hawkesbury River. The need of these literary characters for a new life is appeased through land ownership; an ownership which contains no notion of reparation for the Aboriginal people or changes to the status quo of land ownership systems. In turn, there is no contemplation of

Aboriginal sovereign entitlements which thereby demonstrates an enduring literary reflection of the privileges of white ownership and continued displacement of Indigenous people.

In *Journey to the Stone Country*, a debate between Bo and Annabelle concerning the cultural significance of the dynasty founded at Ranna by the Bigges family, specifically the library, focuses on differences in belief on the basis of a sense of belonging and rests on a white viewpoint. Annabelle defends the importance of the library, which is being eaten by white ants, on the basis of the significance of its foundational English texts: "Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* shelved alongside the six volumes of Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire*…Thomas Carlyle boasting of reading a volume of Gibbon a day for six days when he was a young man (Miller, 2002, p. 179). Bo disagrees that the library is of any value and suggests it is not worth cataloguing as a site of national importance because: "It's just the past" (Miller, 2002, p. 175). Annabelle compares the library to "The playgrounds of the old people", but Bo insists that: "Them stones don't mean no less to the Jangga people today than they meant the day they was put there" (Miller, 2002, p. 176). This presents a personal challenge for Annabelle for whom identity and belonging appear to emanate from the same source:

> It was a sense of things being linked, and of these links reaching back in time, perhaps even to her own origins. There was something precious about these seemingly insignificant connections. If you lost too many of them, surely you lost your sense of who you were. You lost your culture…Bo's playgrounds might

have a prior claim, but could she believe in them emotionally for herself (Miller, 2002, p. 179).

The foundation of Annabelle's cultural identity is contextualised as being based in literary accounts of the past. The narrative contemplation of her adoption of Bo's cultural foundations is at extreme odds with Moreton-Robinson's (2003) prescription that the "ways that country is constitutive of us, and therefore the inalienable nature of our relation to land, marks a radical, indeed incommensurable, difference between us and the non-Indigenous" (p. 31). Martin's (2003) explanation of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing highlights this extreme difference. The relational discourse developed for this cross-cultural critique, while it allows for understanding, consideration, acceptance and respect for cultural differences, does not in any way suggest or propose what is projected as the fictional Annabelle's only alternative; that is adopting Aboriginal beliefs.

Annabelle's fictional reflection on whether her cultural understanding that their debate is based on: "Nothing but the irresistible force of prejudice?" evidences confusion within the literary imagination as to the cultural roots of contemporary white society (Miller, 2002, p. 180). While this offers possibilities for an Australian identity not entirely rooted in English literary history, it is not completely free of prejudice as evidenced in Annabelle's notion that: "Such scraps of knowledge would be utterly foreign to Bo's mind" (Miller, 2002, p. 179). This demonstrates a covert suggestion of the stereotypical image of the limited intellectual capacity of Aboriginal people. Furthermore, Moreton-Robinson's (2004) assertion that: "whiteness…the dominant

regime of knowledge is culturally and racially biased, socially situated and partial" (p. 88) is evidenced in Annabelle's comparison of the grandness of Ranna Homestead to the meagreness of remains at Verbena within the context of continuing dynasties:

> It was the meagreness of the remains that impressed Annabelle…A poignancy in these poor remains that made Annabelle feel protective of them…Unlike at Ranna, here there had been no attempt to found a landed dynasty according to the old model, a new European aristocracy of the Antipodes. At Verbena Station the future had evidently been envisaged, if the future had been envisaged at all, as a modest continuation of the present (Miller, 2002, p. 357).

Although Annabelle is impressed, her negative supposition that there was no thought for the future highlights the veiled suggestion of a superior white intellect, albeit one which has consistently denied the pre-history of tens of thousands of years of sustainable existence by Indigenous Australians. This denial is demonstrated in *The Secret River* in Thornhill's beliefs that: "There were no signs that the blacks felt the place belonged to them. They had no fences that said *this is mine.* No house that said, *this is our home.* There were no fields or flocks that said, *we have put the labour of our hands into this place*" (Grenville, 2005, p. 93). Dick recognises that the patch of yam daisies signalled Aboriginal boundaries and forethought for future food and Sal recognises that their camp was evidence of their home; however, both Dick and Sal are overruled by the domineering Will Thornhill, father and husband respectively.

Negative perceptions of Aboriginal lifestyles are also evident in *Journey to the Stone Country* in Bo's recollection of dance nights with "Plenty of fights…when the rum ran out" (Miller, 2002, p. 358). Through the relational discourse, however, such negativity is defused by descriptions of the dress code and the complexity of a variety of dances:

> 'Grandma always wore her pearls on dance nights. She never allowed no drinking. Us boys would have a bottle of rum planted in that old bluegum stump down by the waterhole.'…They come from all over to Grandma's dances. Fifty people waltzing and foxtrotting and jigging around till the cold dawn sobered us all up (Miller, 2002, p. 358).

Alice Nannup recalls in *When the Pelican Laughed* (1992) how dancing was a big part of the social fabric of real life at the Moore River Mission (p. 77). She describes a different experience later in her life while sitting on the steps outside a hall at Geraldton, her "feet just itching to get on that floor" enticed by the music to a beautiful dance she liked called the Canadian Barn Dance (Nannup, 1992, p. 160). This dance memory, however, is tainted, not by alcohol and fights as suggested in Miller's text, but by recollection of the exclusion and open discrimination which forbade her entry:

> These dances that were held – it wasn't that they had signs nailed up on the door saying No Aborigines, but you just knew you weren't welcome to be there. Besides, if they had alcohol there then that cancelled us out because we weren't

> allowed to be on a licensed premises, or anywhere where alcohol was being served (Nannup, 1992, p. 161).

This disturbing reflection of the prejudices and privileges of white society is also apparent in other texts under discussion. In *The White Earth*, McGahan highlights colonial English origins in the painting on the wall of: "a fox hunt. In England" (2004, p. 46). This painting is then contrasted with an Australian adaptation where:

> William could discern the vague outline of the House itself. This wasn't England anymore. And off in one corner of the painting, so faded as to be almost invisible, was a collection of shapes recognisable as people only because of their white eyes and teeth. Black men, looking on from the shadows, their expressions impossible to read. Hostile? Fearful?" (McGahan, 2004, p. 46).

In *The Secret River*, Grenville encompasses an overwhelming reflection of whiteness from the very beginning of the text through the English origins of her story. Even though William Thornhill has no desire to return to England, his Englishness remains: "Looking down at his estate it was possible to imagine it a version of England" (Grenville, 2005, p. 330). His overwhelming desire for English embellishments is visible in his mansion. It is named Cobham Hall after an English gentleman's residence, and further attempts to imprint an English mark on their new soil are revealed in: "a garden along English lines…Daffodils and roses were planted…real trees, she [Sal] insisted, with proper leaves that fell off in the autumn" (Grenville, 2005, p. 318).

The failure of this fictional garden highlights the flaws inherent in the introduction of migrant based knowledge to tend land without guidance from or respect for the knowledge of Indigenous people whose intimate connection to the land includes a pre-history of many tens of thousands of years:

> In spite of her care the garden did not thrive. The roses never put their roots down. They clung to life, but were little more than stalk. The daffodils were planted but no trace of them was ever seen again. The turf yellowed and shrivelled and finally blew away in wisps of dry straw…Of the two dozen poplars they had planted, most became nothing more than twigs…When the wind blew, the corpses swivelled loose in the ground in a parody of life (Grenville, 2005, p. 319).

Scars of colonial trespass and white cultural practices that continue to wreak havoc on the land and Indigenous cultures remain deeply embedded in the consciousness of Indigenous Australians: forests have been destroyed, rivers have been dammed and the land has been plundered for its natural resources (Roe & Hoogland, cited in Sinatra & Murphy, 1999). Alice Nannup (1992) states:

> I was up there [Port Hedland] when that iron-ore first started, when they started loading it on to the boats, and the dust kicked up was terrible. It was really red and it blew from west to east, all over the port…Even when they could see how the dust was choking the place they didn't stop…everything you touched was red…All that mining and destroying of the land is something that worries me a

lot…the world is off it's axis, they're destroying everything just to make money (p. 215).

Despite such industrial destruction of the natural environment, however, the oldest living culture on the planet has survived colonisation, and continues to evolve as a contemporary culture which continues to embrace its ancestral roots and cultural beliefs.

In Poetic expression

Masters of Change

Our world is full of change
all about us and within
we think we are the masters
creators of all things.

Paths well trodden disappear
as seasons come and go
within the weight of ancient pasts
that control the ebb and flow.

The long arm of nature
dismissed by modern minds
still destroys by drought and flood
what mortal man defines.

The winds of time will rustle
the dead leaves grown deep
clearing choking debris
to reveal the life beneath.

4.7 Summary

This examination highlights how attachment through ownership of land forms the basis of white belonging within the chosen texts. This outcome validates Moreton-

Robinson's (2003) assertion that a sense of belonging for migrant-colonisers (and descendants) is:

> often expressed as a profound feeling of attachment. It is derived from ownership and achievement and is inextricably tied to a racialized social status that confers certain privileges: a social status that is enhanced by a version of Australian history that privileges the exploits of white Australians by representing them as the people who made this country what it is today (p. 24).

For the progeny of the white protagonists within the chosen texts, however, there is an overriding reflection of belonging based on the basis of birth place. Annabelle (in *Journey to the Stone Country*) was born on the Suttor; John McIvor (in *The White Earth*) was born on Kuran Downs, and for Thornhill's children (in *The Secret River*) who have no connection with England having been born in Australia: "If they were to go to London they would be outsiders… [London] belonged to someone else" (Grenville, 2005, p. 317). By default, these children feel they belong in or to their place of birth – Australia. There is no suggestion, however, that either in or out of a literary context such belonging should forego recognition of the sovereign entitlements of Traditional Owners through attempts to adopt a connection to the Ancestors.

As this critical examination shows, there are distinct differences between Aboriginal sovereignty which embodies belonging and white ownership and belonging. *Journey to the Stone Country* stalled when confronted with the violent methods of achieving white ownership, but chose to offer a continued form of white ownership after

merely acknowledging the prior possession of Aboriginal people and the violence used to displace them. *The White Earth,* after attempting to transpose an Aboriginal spiritual connection to the land into white belonging, continued generational white ownership while merely acknowledging a prior Aboriginal possession. Although *The Secret River* set out to highlight cultural differences, it offers a continuation of the overwhelming privileges of white ownership through reflections of the wealth and power achieved by white domination. This is evidenced most profoundly in the positioning of Thornhill's house over the carving of the fish and boat in the rock where his: "*children's children would walk about on the floorboards, and never know what was beneath their feet"* (Grenville, 2005, p. 316). This demonstrates a physical and mental displacement of Indigenous people. Moreover, it demonstrates a failure to recognise the link between literature and life that continues to displace Indigenous people through a discourse of negative representation of Indigenous people and an overwhelming reflection of whiteness. This failure equates to and is part of a *cultural unconsciousness* discussed in the 'Results of the critique' (5.3).

Chapter 5 A New Fork In An Old Road

Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail
(Ralph Waldo Emerson).

5.1 Introduction

This research began as an attempt to understand the contradiction between self-representations encountered in Indigenous texts and negative literary representations of Indigenous people in non-Indigenous post-millennial texts. The challenge as a non-Indigenous researcher was to formulate a research methodology that included Indigenous literary voices in a critique of non-Indigenous literature. This required personal interaction with, and assistance from, cultural mentors and concentrated scrutiny and reflection of personal assumptions and perceptions with regard to Indigenous people, Indigenous cultures, and Indigenous world views. Meeting these criteria enabled me to establish a research standpoint from which it became possible to witness and understand the complexity of the research phenomenon beyond the boundaries of standard literary practices.

5.2 The journey

This research journey has been one accompanied by opposing tensions. The confrontational question posed at the commencement of the journey as to why a middle-class, middle-aged white woman would be interested in Indigenous literary representation, remained foremost in a frame of critical consciousness. It taunted and drove me in the same form of transformative argument as that suggested by Megan Boler

and Michalinos Zembylas (cited in Regan, 2005) for a "pedagogy of discomfort - the need to move outside our comfort zones in order to critically reflect on our emotional reactions to discomforting truths" (p. 8). It is only by recognising my zone as 'one of comfort' that I can see the (unidentified) privileges I enjoy. The 'discomforting truth' is a realisation that Indigenous physical and mental displacement together with the emotional trauma of over two centuries continues as a result of a complacency which comes easily to those in the privileged space of the dominant culture. Like many others, I was actively (albeit unconsciously) complacent about the privileges I enjoyed in consequence of the involuntary and continued displacement of Indigenous people. The strategic vision of Regan (2005) for a decolonised Canadian[8] future penetrated my comfort zone and shook me from my complacency:

> [L]earning is not 'all in our heads' and …stories engage our whole being in ways that push us to question the very epistemological and pedagogical lenses through which we view the world and our relationship with Indigenous peoples…it is time…to shake ourselves from the complacency that comes with dominant culture power and privilege. To think about who we have been in order to imagine who we might become at home and in the global community of the 21st century (p. 9).

The poems included in Appendix A are expressions of the learning I encountered throughout this journey, poems which outline the growth of a cultural consciousness to the ongoing displacement of Indigenous people through a position of comfort, complacency, and failure to acknowledge or accept different world views.

[8] Goldie (1989) provides evidence of similarities in the struggles of First Nation people of Canada to overcome negative attitudes and discrimination to those of Indigenous Australians.

5.3 Result of cross-cultural critique

An in-depth explication of the theme of displacement demonstrates that the chosen post-millennial texts serve to displace characters, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to accommodate a space for re-envisioning a different future. However, this complex endeavour fails. While some representations of white characters may be disturbing, those characters remain ultimately successful. Representation through a white lens, however, continues to enshrine Indigenous people in images of the past that perpetuate negative stereotypes within circumstances that maintain white control, ultimately foreclosing even the possibility of a space any different from the past: "a road to programmatic hell…well paved, a beautiful boulevard of good intentions" (Delores 1985, cited in Fletcher, 1994, p. 53).

This thesis demonstrates the role of literature in perpetuating negative attitudes towards Indigenous people through stereotypical literary representations and an ongoing physical and mental displacement as part of enlivened literary re-enactments of the colonial era. Indigenous voices, included in a relational discourse in critique, confirm the currency of negative attitudes, discrimination and alienation of Indigenous people in contemporary Australian texts and life. Any perceived reconciliation/reparation or apology intended by creating an awareness of settler violence through the fictive-historical genre (as stated by some authors) is immediately undermined by demonstration of a literary consciousness of negativity and displacement of Indigenous characters. This literary consciousness of negativity impinges on any notion of reparation that may

ultimately be contemplated by the writers. Moreover, such negativity feeds a deficit discourse in relation to Indigenous people and cultures. This critique demonstrates how, within post-millennial Australian literature, the transposition from a physical to a mental displacement of Indigenous people has, over time, manifested in a *cultural unconsciousness* whereby negative representation and perception of Indigenous people continues without question or contradiction. Indigenous voices within the relational discourse reveal awareness that this state of *cultural unconsciousness* shields the settler society from the weight of immoral past violence which occurred as a consequence of cultural differences. Langton (2002) asserts that "Our fate will always be entwined with Australians who are historically and intellectually blind to difference" (p. 87). Furthermore, Langton (1996) suggests this blindness to difference is a "national psychosis…the psychotic persecution of Aboriginal people", while Behrendt (2006) terms it a "psychological terra nullius", created by an "invisibility of the real because of a focus on the imagined" (p. 2).

Constant expressions of violence and discrimination by Indigenous writers, poets and critics are a timely reminder that inequality and injustice remain an active force within Australian literature and society. Lorraine McGee-Sippel (cited in Reed-Gilbert, 2000) confirms this in her short poem *Stereotype Images*:

> The portrayal of Kooris
> Nearly always the same,
> Stereotypical negative images.
> We shoulder the blame. (p. 35)

Any claim of impunity by non-Indigenous authors for stereotypical negative images of Indigenous people within the fictive-historical genre on the basis of a need for accuracy fails on two counts. Firstly, negative colonial representations can be adapted just as the time and place of historical events are adapted at the fiction writer's will to meet the demands of the text. As Grenville freely admits in her memoir, *Searching for the Secret River* (2006): "There'd been no information about that part…I adapted from other sources…loosely, but kept the basic shape of the encounter" (p. 162). Secondly, reiteration and perpetuation of discursive construction of colonial images condones the racist attitudes of the colonial era. Degrading Aboriginal characters in the text through animal comparisons demonstrates how a *cultural unconsciousness* to ongoing negative attitudes (as evidenced by Indigenous voices in critique) perpetuates racist prescriptions. Moreover, authorial choice of negative Aboriginal representation demonstrates an overwhelming reflection of the power and privilege of whiteness. Moreton-Robinson reminds us that "Representations of whiteness continue to be enshrined and conveyed in curricula, television, films, newspapers, novels, museums, performing and visual arts, songs and other material culture" (p. 79).

5.4 The significance of literature

Negative literary representation of Indigenous people has been perpetuated through centuries of racist discourse (Adams, 1962; Foss, 1988; Goldie, 1989; Reynolds 2005). Analysis of the chosen texts evidences, in the first instance, how in literature, negative perceptions are used to justify the violent physical displacement of Indigenous people in order to achieve white ownership. Secondly, literary mental displacement

follows in order to enable an enduring sense of belonging. This embodies what Attwood (2005) describes as a: "form of forgetting – a disremembering" (p. 243). This ability to disremember and mentally displace Indigenous people is evidenced in all three texts through a character that represents the social conscience of the dominant culture. In *Journey to the Stone Country* when Annabelle learns about the actions of her grandfather, she measures it in the context of a battlefield. In *The White Earth,* Ruth discovers the death of Traditional owners at the ruthlessness hands of her grandfather, but it does not alter her decision to claim ownership of the property. In *The Secret River,* although Sal is aware of Will's involvement in the final massacre, she mentally displaces such knowledge so she may enjoy their prosperity and wealthy status as "something of a king… and queen" (Grenville, 2005, p. 314).

In the comfort and complacency of the dominant culture, contemporary readers are easily able to disconnect from literary violence of the past like Sal in *The Secret River*. This allows them to continue to bask in the illusion of terra nullius ignoring the legacies of past practices and policies of the dominant culture for Indigenous people. However, as noted by Colin Tatz (2000) for many, it is not merely a literary representation, but a living reality:

> For the vast majority of Aborigines and Islanders, the past is not a foreign country. What governments concede Aborigines may have endured in the past, they are still enduring – namely, wholesale imprisonments, removal of children to institutions of various kinds, gross ill-health, appalling environmental conditions,

> unemployability, increasing illiteracy, family breakdown, internal violence, and almost unbelievable levels of youth suicide (p. 77).

At the end of each text, white characters remain firmly seated, either in a position of ownership, or a position to claim ownership, of the property at the centre of each story. The perpetrators of injustice, although they may be unsettled, receive no legal punishment and accept no moral accountability for the displacement of Indigenous people. These novels serve the reading interest of the dominant culture who, if they do believe the land was 'taken' from Indigenous people, accepts no moral accountability or obligation. The gratuitous violence and negative representations narrated throughout the texts, whether historically based or the fictional flow of a writer's pen, serves only the fictional interests of the white author and/or white audience. As portrayed in poetry, however, there are worrying consequences of serving a white centre with re-presentations of negative connotations:

> The moving finger writes:
> And, having writ,
> Moves on: nor all your piety nor wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
> Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it (Fitzgerald, n.d., p. *li*).

The assertion by Adam Gall (2008) that Grenville's novel and ensuing memoir are "significant contemporary cultural texts, reflecting and elaborating elements of the surrounding white Australian settler culture that forms the context of their production" is correct, but it also demonstrates how Grenville's text and memoir serve the white centre.

Moreton-Robinson's (2000) claim that "Although the morphology of colonialism has changed, it persists in discursive and cultural practices" (from which Gall takes his stance) highlights that white centre (p. 24). While these novels inform readers of injustices of the past, they simultaneously revive negative stereotypical images of Aboriginal people that are dehumanising and degrading and have the potential to perpetuate negative perceptions and/or attitudes.

Contentious debate about the effects of literature in and on society has continued over centuries through the work of philosophers and writers. As far back as the fifth century BC, Plato was concerned with 'representations for persuasion' as opposed to 'representations of reality' (Waterfield, 1994). Reflections on my personal journey stand as witness to the persuasion of literary representations to create images which nurture ingrained negative perceptions and attitudes towards a *common* Indigenous people rather than realistic images of individuals with cultures different from my own. Reynolds (1989) states that:

> Europeans developed a concept of savagery [which]…came to Australia with the settlers and…applied willy-nilly to the indigenous people…Behaviour towards the Aborigines, public and private, was intimately connected with the images of the Aborigines embedded in European thought (pp. 96-97).

It is not inconceivable that continuing negative literary representations of Indigenous people, together with colonial imagery, could remain an invisible source of perpetuating negative attitudes and disregard for Indigenous people from one generation

of writers and readers to the next without the benefit of some form of cross-cultural engagement with Indigenous voices. Djon Mundine (2000) confirms that "Most non-Aboriginal people, both Australian and from other nations, have their first (and possibly only) contact with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders through viewing Aboriginal art or attending a cultural performance or event" (p. 191). This scenario is evidenced in McGahan's (2004) text when the boy William studies a painting on his uncle's wall:

> Aborigines? He thought of deserts, and dark-skinned figures with spears, but he had never met a black person… Then he remembered what the men in the national park had said about marks on bunya pines, and about the clearings on the hilltops. But that was long ago, surely (p.136).

For many people, negative perceptions and attitudes towards Indigenous people are developed through a generational failure to question the literary (or artistic) imagination. Alice Nannup suggests that: "if that's where it starts from, it stands to reason that's where it has to stop" (Nannup, 1992, p. 192). Whereas post-millennial literature held the opportunity for narratives of change in the Australian consciousness as part of a process of reconciliation and/or reparation, such opportunities are constricted by the manifestation of a *cultural unconsciousness* to the displacement of Indigenous people as Traditional Owners and spiritual custodians of the land. Indigenous voices within the relational discourse intricately link settler violence and the displacement of Indigenous people to a failure of the dominant culture to imagine possibilities outside the boundaries

of a white lens. Moreton-Robinson (2003) stresses that “There can be no equal partnership while there is illegal dispossession” (p. 27).

5.5 Out of the darkness comes a new dawn

The use of a relational discourse in literary critique offers a platform for challenging the practice of negative stereotyping and the racial innuendo that obscurely reflects the power and privilege of whiteness. The innovative dimension of this relational discourse to include Indigenous voices to obtain a cross-cultural reading demonstrates its potential to overcome the negative phenomenon that literature helps to perpetuate. To rethink the failure of literary imaginations (in both writers and readers) within a positive light, will necessarily require the inclusion, acceptance and respect of Indigenous voices, all of which are features of the design for the relational discourse applied throughout this research. These voices demonstrate the resolution and resilience of Indigenous authors, poets, and academics to bridge the cultural divide that exists within Australian literature and Australian society. The foremost means of overcoming the *cultural unconsciousness* is by acceptance and respect of the ‘reality’ of difference contained within Indigenous world views.

Exploring new ways of reading and critiquing non-Indigenous Australian literature by comparison to the literary expressions of Indigenous people in a relational discourse of respect offers an extensive opportunity for recognition of the legacies of a history of invasion as opposed to one of peaceful settlement. Literary critique which places episodes in larger theoretical frameworks to provide a holistic view can place “new typologies onto the structure of knowledge or onto a taken-for-granted

perspective…to make others think about and possibly re-evaluate what they have hitherto taken to be unquestionable knowledge" (Hart, 1998, p. 8). Using literary discourses to probe and question obscure sources of negative perceptions and attitudes towards Indigenous people which feed the *cultural unconsciousness* of Australian readers can only help to develop cross-cultural relations in new directions.

5.6 Original contributions to knowledge

The original contribution to knowledge of this research is its unique methodological framework which includes the voices of Indigenous authors, poets and critics in the critique of literature. The relational discourse, which is based on the exploration of alternate voices and texts, provides the means through which the existence of a *cultural unconsciousness* and its literary pathway are made apparent. This is imperative in light of the fact that all three texts, as major prize-winners, are much favoured additions to tertiary literary courses nationally (and some, internationally). Many students will be exposed to the texts without the benefit of Indigenous voices. This framework for a relational discourse in critique offers the means of engaging with Indigenous voices, ultimately benefiting students (and researchers) as well as nullifying the potential for perpetuation of colonial racist ideologies throughout literary discourses.

5.7 Limitations of this research study

The limitations of this study lie within the parameters and the scope of the research. The study is concentrated on three post-millennial texts by Anglo Australian authors and three Indigenous texts, all chosen from the possibility of countless texts. The authors and/or texts were chosen for their prize-winning status, popularity or currency on

literary courses, or personal significance. It is acknowledged that there are many other post-millennial texts which could have been chosen by multi-cultural Australian authors which would no doubt have resulted in a different outcome, however, this research was focused specifically on a contradiction in Indigenous representation. The issue of displacement raises many important and ongoing questions at the heart of the cultural divide in Australian society, not least of which is the place of the past as a recurring theme in contemporary Australian literature. While it is recognised that inclusion of more texts would enhance the diversity and range of possible codes and themes, the scope of this project is consistent with a Masters thesis. It would, in light of the outcome of this study, be interesting to explore the question of literary displacement through an enduring reflection of whiteness between more socio-literary relationships, but that would require a more extensive study.

5.8 Conclusion

The relational discourse which engages with Indigenous voices exposes how post-millennial literature re-enactments of frontier confrontations reflect continued white ownership and spiritual belonging predicated on the physical and mental displacement of Indigenous people. The legacy of colonial discrimination is reinvigorated by a literary fascination with the colonial past, and a popular readership whose fascination is not likely to fade. Jane Sullivan (2006) suggests that: “novelists are increasingly preoccupied with exploring history” (p. 10), a notion which is confirmed through a continuing flow of such publications: *The Ballad of Desmond Kale* (2005), *Lovesong* (2009), and *The Lieutenant* (2010).

Oodgeroo Noonuccal (1970) highlights Indigenous resistance to displacement and an enduring focus on the future in her poem, *Song of Hope* (from which Grenville and McGahan both adopt the familiar phrase - fathers' fathers):

> See plain the promise,
> Dark freedom-lover!
> Night's nearly over,
> And though long the climb,
> New rights will greet us,
> New mateship meet us,
> And joy complete us
> In our new Dream Time.
>
> To our fathers' fathers
> The pain, the sorrow;
> To our children's children
> The glad tomorrow. (p. 41)

Literature should provide a bridge to understanding that early negative representations of Indigenous people were nurtured through colonial discourses based on racist foundations. Australian post-millennial literature must find a way to overcome these foundations and develop a literary conscience and imagination which offers aspects of cultural difference in a respectful manner that will carry readers beyond a *terra nullius* consciousness steeped in centuries of colonial ideologies. Although *Journey to the Stone*

Country, The White Earth, and *The Secret River* are only a small sample of post-millennial Australian literature, they are all prize-winning texts which validate their excellence and potential for inclusion in the literary canon. Consequently, the prestige of these texts is immediately enhanced assuring their popularity with an expansive readership. These factors culminate in their inclusion on literary courses compounding, without intervention, any institutional unawareness of the potential negative impact. As well as re-presenting historical atrocities through a purely white lens, these texts re-present negative colonial imagery that retains the potential to prompt negative perceptions and attitudes towards Indigenous people.

This thesis challenges researchers across all disciplines to consider the use and adaptability of a relational discourse to expose the extent of influence that ingrained negativity towards Indigenous people (established primarily through literature before the colonisation of Australia) continues to have on the attitudes of today's Australians. This research unveiled the manifestation of a literary physical and mental displacement of Indigenous people as a means to overcome an unresolved *Anglo displacement anxiety*. This unresolved 'anxiety' (unconsciously) continues to drive a deficit discourse towards Indigenous people and feeds notions of negativity throughout literary discourses affecting the imagination and intellect of both writers and readers. Literary expression which respects the involuntary displacement of Indigenous people could only enhance the reputation of prize-winning authors who have the ability to breathe new life into fictitious characters and texts of the future.

Although it may be a struggle to defeat the *cultural unconsciousness* which lurks within our literary conscience and imagination to make its way into the minds, hearts and spirits of Australian society, we must, as individuals and as a collective, challenge the ingrained negative assumptions and racist myths that have wended their way obscurely through generations of the dominant culture. Overcoming the unresolved *Anglo displacement anxiety* which drives a burgeoning literary interest in the tragedies of the colonial past requires engagement with Indigenous people through relational discourses which create a necessary awareness that acknowledges the unique position of Indigenous people. While, understandably, it will not be easy to reconcile over two centuries of unresolved issues, literature holds a major key in the transformation of negative representations and attitudes towards Indigenous people. The collective literary conscience and imagination of Australian writers needs to recognise accept and respect cultural differences in order to uncover a new fork on the road to an ethical reconciliation – in literature and in life.

Bibliography

Adams, P.G. (1962). *Travelers and travel liars, 1660-1800.* Berkeley: Univ. of California Pr.

Altick, R.D. (1967). *Preface to critical reading.* (4th ed). New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin. H. (1998). *Key concepts in post-colonial studies.* London: Routledge.

Attwood, B. (1989). *The making of the Aborigines.* Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Attwood, B. (2005). Unsettling pasts: Reconciliation and history in settler Australia. *Postcolonial Studies, 8(3),* 243-259. DOI: 10.1080/13688790500231012.

Behrendt, L. (2006, March). What lies beneath: Larissa Behrendt explores how traditional Aboriginal values, effectively harnessed to contemporary social policy-making, can help invigorate Australian urban communities. *Meanjin, 65(1),* 4-12.

Behrendt, L. (2005). Law stories and life stories: Aboriginal women, the law and Australian society. *Australian Feminist Studies, 20*(47), 245-254. DOI: 10.1080/08164640500090434.

Behrendt, L. (2002). Unfinished journey – Indigenous self-determination. *Arena Magazine, 58,* 24-27.

Beresford, Q., & Omaji, P. (1998). *Our state of mind: Racial planning and the stolen generations.* Fremantle WA: Freemantle Arts Centre Press.

Bird, C. (2002). *An Overview of the presence of Indigenous characters in Australian fiction.* Retrieved August 8, 2006, from http://www.carmelbird.com/indigenous.htm

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology. 3(2),* 77-101. DOI: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

Clendinnen, I. (2006). The history question: Who owns the past? *Quarterly Essay,* 23, 1-72.

Davis, J. (1991). *A boy's life.* Broome, WA: Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation.

Denzin, N.K. (1997). *Interpretive ethnography: ethnographic practices for the 21st century.* Thousand Oaks Calif: Sage Publications.

Denzin N. & Lincoln Y.S. (Eds.). (c2000). *The handbook of qualitative research,* 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks Calif: Sage Publications.

Dodson, P. (2003). The end in the beginning: Re(de)finding Aboriginality. In M. Grattan (Ed.), *Blacklines*: *Contemporary critical writing by Indigenous Australians.* (pp. 25-42). Carlton: Melbourne University Press.

Eagleton, T. (1996). *Literary theory: An introduction (2nd ed.).* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Evans, R. (2003). Across the Queensland frontier. In B. Attwood & S.G. Foster (Eds.), *Frontier conflict: The Australian experience,* (pp. 63-75). Canberra, ACT: National Museum of Australia.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language.* London, New York: Longman.

Fitzgerald, E. (Trans.). (n.d.). *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.* Sydney: Gornall The Publisher.

Fletcher, C. (Ed.) (1994). *Aboriginal self-determination in Australia.* Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J.H. (2000). The interview: From structured questions to negotiated text. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.), (pp. 645-672). Thousand Oaks Calif: Sage Publications.

Foss, M. (1988). *Beyond The Black Stump: Tales of travellers to Australia 1787-1850.* London: Michael O'Mara Books Ltd.

Gall, A. (2008). Taking/taking up: Recognition and the frontier in Grenville's The Secret River. *JASAL. Special Issue 2008: The Colonial Present,* (94-104).

Gergen, M.M., & Gergen, K.J. (2000). Qualitative inquiry, tensions and transformations. In N. Denzin. & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.), (pp.1025-1046). London: Sage Publications.

Gibbons, T. (1984). *Literature and awareness: An introduction to the close reading of prose and verse.* Caulfield East: Edward Arnold (Australia) Pty Ltd.

Ginibi, R.L. (1999). *Haunted by the past.* St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Goldie, T. (1989). *Fear and temptation: The image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand literatures.* Kingston, Ont: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Goodall, H. (1997). Aboriginal history and the politics of information control. In R. White & P. Russell (Eds.), *Memories & dreams: Reflections on 20th century Australia.* (pp.77-95). Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Grattan, M. (Ed.). (2000). *Reconciliation: Essays on reconciliation in Australia.* Melbourne: Black Inc.

Grenville, K. (2010). *The lieutenant.* Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company.

Grenville, K. (2006). *Searching for the secret river.* Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company.

Grenville, K. (2005). *The secret river.* Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company.

Griscom, J. (1992). Women and power: Definition, dualism, and difference. *Psychology of Women Quarterly. 16(4),* 389-414.

Hage, G. (2003). *Against paranoid nationalism: Searching for hope in a shrinking society.* Annandale: Pluto Press.

Hart, C. (1998). *Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination.* London: Sage Publications.

Hart, V., & Whatman, S. (1998). Decolonising the concept of knowledge. Retrieved 16 August 16, 2006, from www.duckdigital.net/FOD/FOD1032.html

Healy, J.J. (1989). *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia.* (2nd ed.). St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press.

Heiss, A.M. (2003), *Dhuuluu-Yala (to talk straight): Publishing Indigenous literature.* Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Janke, T. (2005). *Butterfly song.* Camberwell: Penguin Group.

Johnson-Riordan, L. (2004). White men can tell stories but…: Reading Australian rules and the tracker at the Adelaide Festival of Arts, 2002. In S. Schech & B. Wadham *Placing race and localising whiteness,* (pp.178-196). Melbourne: Flinders Press.

Kallen, E. (2004). *Social inequality & social injustice: A human rights perspective.* Houndmills [England]: London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Keneally, T. (1972). *The chant of Jimmy Blacksmith.* Sydney: Angus & Robertson.

Kossow, S. (2007). Voicing the "great Australian silence": Kate Grenville's narrative of settlement in the secret river. *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 2(2),* 7-18. DOI: 10.1177/0021989407078574.

Koval, R. (2005, July 17). Interview with Kate Grenville. *Books and writing*. Retrieved July 21, 2006, from http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/bwriting/stories/s1414510.htm

Langford, R. (1988). *Don't take your love to town.* Ringwood Vic.: Penguin Books Ltd.

Langton, M. (2002). Senses of place: Fourth overland lecture, 2001. *Overland,* 166 [Autumn 2002], 75-87. Retrieved October 11, 2007, from http://search.informit.com.au.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/fullText;dn=200203826;res=APAFT

Langton, M. (c1993). *Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television-: an essay for the Australian Film Commission on the politics and aesthetics of filmmaking by and about Aboriginal people and things*. North Sydney, NSW: Australian Film Commission.

Langton, M. (1996). *How Aboriginal religion has become an administrable subject*. Retrieved 13 June 13, 2006, from http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-July-1996/langton.html

Lapadat, J.C., & Lindsay, A.C. (1999). Transcription in research and practice: From standardization of technique to interpretative positionings. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 5, 64-85. DOI. 10.1177/107780049900500104. Retrieved July 13, 2009, from http://qix.sagepub.com/content/5/1/64

Le Compte, M.D., & Schensul, J.J. (c1999). *Analysing and interpreting ethnographic data.* Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press.

Lehtonen, Mikko. (2000). *Cultural analysis of texts.* A. Ahonen & K. Clarke [Trans.]. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

McDonald, R. (2005). *The ballad of Desmond Kale.* Milsons Point, NSW: Vintage.

McGahan, A. (2004). *The white earth.* Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin.

Martin, K. (2003). Ways of knowing, being and doing: A theoretical framework and methods for Indigenous and Indigenist re-search. *Journal of Australian Studies, 76,* 203-214.

Miller, A. (n.d.). On writing *journey to the stone country.* In Allen & Unwin, *Notes for reading groups,* (pp. 2-4). Retrieved March 3, 2009, from http//www.allenandunwin.com/_uploads/BookPdf/ReadingGroupGuide/9781741141467.pdf

Miller, A. (2002), *Journey to the Stone Country.* Crows Nest NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Miller, A. (2009). *Lovesong.* Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Moreton-Robinson, A. (2002). *Talkin' up to the white woman: Aboriginal women and feminism.* St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press.

Moreton-Robinson, A. (2003). I still call Australia home: Indigenous belonging and place in a white postcolonising society. In S. Ahmed et al. *Uprootings/regroundings*: *Questions of home and migration*. (pp. 23-40). Oxford: Berg .

Moreton-Robinson, A. (2003a), Introduction: Resistance, recovery and revitalization. In M. Grossman (Ed.), *Blacklines: Contemporary critical writing by Indigenous Australians.* (pp.127-131). Carlton: Melbourne University Press.

Moreton-Robinson, A. (Ed.). (2004). *Whitening race: Essays in social and cultural criticism.* Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Moreton-Robinson, A. (Ed.). (2007). *Sovereign subjects: Indigenous sovereignty matters.* Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.

Morgan, S.J. (1987). *My place.* Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

Muir, H.J. (2004). *Very big journey: My life as I remember it.* Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

MumShirl. (1987). *MumShirl: An autobiography/with the assistance of Bobbi Sykes.* Richmond, Vic: Heinemann Educational Australia.

Mundine, D. (2000). Negotiating co-existence. In M. Grattan (Ed.), *Reconciliation: Essays on reconciliation in Australia* (pp.191-194). Melbourne: Black Inc.

Murphy, P.B. (1982). *Dictionary of Australian history.* Sydney: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Nakata, M. (2007). *Disciplining the savages: Savaging the disciplines.* Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Nannup, A. (1992). *When the pelican laughed.* Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

Nelson, E.S. (Ed.) (1988). *Connections: Essays on black literature.* Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press.

O'Conner, E. (1980). *The spirit man*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson.

Pierce, P. (2004). The solitariness of Alex Miller. *Australian Literary Studies. 21(3),* 299-312.

Prichard, K.S. (1929/1972). *Coonardoo: The well in the shadow*. Penrith: The Discovery Press.

Purcell, L. (2002). *Black chicks talking*. Australia: Hodder Headline Australia Pty Limited.

Quaill, A. (2000). Laced flour and tin boxes: The art of Fiona Foley. In *Worlds of Dreaming*. Retrieved May 30, 2005, from http://nga.gov.au/Dreaming/Index.cfm?Refrnc=Ch8

Reed-Gilbert, K. (Ed.) (2000). *The strength of us as women: Black women speak.* Charnwood, ACT: Ginninderra Press.

Regan, P. (2005). A transformative framework for decolonizing Canada: A non-indigenous approach. IGOV Doctoral Student Symposium (pp.1-10). Retrieved July 30, 2007, from http://web.uvic.ca/igov/research/pdfs/A%20Transformative%20Framework%20for%20Decolonizing%20Canada.pdf

Regan, S. (1998). Reader-response criticism and reception theory. In S. Eliot & W.R. Owens (Eds.). *A handbook to literary research,* (pp. 139-149). London: Routledge.

Reynolds, H. (1981). *The other side of the frontier*. North Queensland: James Cook University.

Reynolds, H. (1989). *Dispossession: Black Australians and white invaders*. North Sydney, NSW: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd.

Reynolds, H. (1999). *Why weren't we told?: A personal search for the truth about our history*. Ringwood, Victoria: Viking.

Reynolds, Henry. (2005). *Nowhere people.* Victoria: Penguin Group.

Rigney, L. (1997). Internationalisation of an Indigenous anti-colonial cultural critique of research methodologies: A guide to indigenist research methodology and its principles. *Journal for Native American Studies,* [WICAZO sa Review, University of Minnesota Press] *14(2),* [Fall Ed], 109-121.

Rings, F. (2002). Voice on the wind. In L. Purcell *Black chicks talking.* (pp. 73-105). Australia and New Zealand: Hodder Headline Australia Pty Limited.

Roe, P., & Hoogland, F. (1999). Black and white, a trail to understanding. In J. Sinatra & P. Murphy *Listen to the people, listen to the land,* (pp. 11-31). Victoria: Melbourne University Press.

Rose, P.I. (1997). *They and we:Rracial and ethnic relations in the United States.* New York: McGraw and Hill.

Roughsey, D. (1977). *Moon and rainbow: The autobiography of an Aboriginal.* Adelaide: Rigby.

Saulwick, I., Muller, D., & Mackay, H. (2000). Public opinion on reconciliation: Snap shot, close focus, long lens. In M Grattan (Ed.), *Reconciliation: Essays on reconciliation in Australia,* (pp. 33-34). Melbourne: Black Inc.

Sinatra, J. & Murphy, P. (1999). *Listen to the people, listen to the land.* Carlton: Melbourne University Press.

Shoemaker, A. (1989)**.** *Black words white page: Aboriginal literature 1929-1988.* St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press.

Smith, L. (2003). *Decolonising methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples.* [6th impression]. London & New York: Zed Books Ltd.

Sullivan, J. (2006, October 21). Making a fiction of history. *The Age,* pp. 12-13.

Tascon, S.M. (2004). Uncovering race, returning to origins. In S. Schech & B. Wadham (Eds.), *Placing race and localising whiteness,* (pp. 28-41). Adelaide: Flinders Press.

Tatz, C. (2000). The dark side of sport. In Michelle Grattan, (Ed.) *Reconciliation: Essays on Australian Reconciliation*, (pp. 74-87). Melbourne, Vic: Black Inc.

Tucker, M. (1977). *If everyone cared: An autobiography.* Sydney: Ure Smith.

Unaipon, D. (2001) *Legendary tales of the Australian aborigines.* (Ed. S. Muecke and A. Shoemaker). Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press.

Wadham, B. (2002). What does the white man want? White masculinities and Aboriginal reconciliation. In Sharyn Pearce and Vivienne Muller *Manning the next millennium: Studies in masculinities*, (pp. 215-224). Bentley, WA: Black Swan Press.

Walker, K. (1981). *My People*. (4th ed.). Milton: Jacaranda Press.

Watego, C. (1988). Backgrounds to Aboriginal literature. In E.S. Nelson (Ed.) C*onnections*: *essays on black literatures.* (pp. 11-24). Canberra: Australian Studies Press.

Waterfield, R. [Trans.] (1994). *Republic/Plato.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Watson, S.W. (2002). Hotel Bone. *Jacket Magazine.* Jacket 16. Retrieved from http://jacketmagazine.com/16/ov-waga.html

White, P. (Ed.). (1977) *A fringe of leaves.* Ringwood: Penguin Books.

Williams, E. (1996). *Breath of life: Moments in transit towards Aboriginal sovereignty.* Braddon: Canberra Contemporary Art Space.

Wright, Alexis (2006). *Carpentaria.* Western Sydney: Giramondo Publishing Company.

Wright, A. (2007, June 9).Gulf music. Abstract [edited] from *On Writing Carpentaria. The Australian.* Retrieved June10, 2007, from http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,21853571-5001986,00.html

Wyndham, S. (2005, July 10). A woman with a past. [Interview with Kate Grenville.] *Sydney Morning Herald.* Retrieved April 8, 2009, from http://infoweb.newsbank.com.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/iw-search/we/InfoWeb?p_product=AWNB&p_theme=aggregated5&p_action=doc&p_docid=10B3B3B4D72EDC38&p_docnum=3&p_queryname=3

Wyndham, S. (2006, September 16). River of champers for Grenville opus. [Interview with Kate Grenville.] *Sydney Morning Herald.* Retrieved September 9, 2009, from http://infoweb.newsbank.com.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/iw-search/we/InfoWeb?p_product=AWNB&p_theme=aggregated5&p_action=doc&p_docid=1142B550A8506770&p_docnum=1&p_queryname=4

Young, S. (2004). Social work theory and practice: the invisibility of whiteness. In A. Moreton-Robinson (Ed.). *Whitening race: Essays in social and cultural criticism.* (pp.104-118). Canberra ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Appendix A Poems as Expression of Journey

The following poems are expressions of the learning I encountered throughout my research journey. The order in which they appear represents no particular stage of the journey.

1. *Ebony & Ivory*

Who am I?
Who are You?
How can we be We?

If I am I,
and you are You,
then we, two separate people be.

We share one world
where space has boundaries
defined as histories disagree.

Roots of ancient wrongs
now lodged in modern myth
cause eternal animosity.

Endless dreams of paradise
are LOST
to you and me.

2. *The sound of the didgeridoo*

In introduction to the land
you told us tales of old -
rivers, mountains, sacred pools
we watched the world unfold.
Dugong, birds and turtles
you knew and loved them all,
native trees and flowers
lived in your vast recall.
But the greatest magic you bestowed
came from an ancient sound
as dust rose up from dancing feet
upon the bora ground.

3. *Sister Song*

I once was blind,
so blind I could not see
that which I did not want to see
was prejudicing me.

A sister's hand extended
in academic sway
exposed the faulty premise
that guided every day.

The power of a language
to blind a human soul
assured a form of bondage
denying some their role.

The wisdom of this sister
invokes us all to see
across the world all people
share one humanity.

4. *Spirits of the night*

They come, like keepers of the night
at close of day,
they shine, with laughter in their eyes
and stand
like beacons on a distant shore
to light the way.
They are, the spirits of this land
who wait in silence
for their call
to be obeyed.

5. *A 'civilized' society*

We do not listen to those that cry,
that wail in misery.
We have immunized our senses
against unpleasantness and pain.

We are too comfortable,
too distant and too dead to understand
the suffering of others
to call ourselves – humane!

6. *The Winds of Change*

Long ago the winds of change
dislodged the knowledge trees
whose roots stretched deep into the heart of mother earth
and she began to weep.

Her tears dropped down like pouring rain
in a never-ending flow
to soothe her burning flesh
and aching soul.

A land that once was bountiful
now has ceased to grow;
a stark and blinding whiteness reflects
what science does not know.

7. *Civilisation*

Beneath the glitter
it sucks the life from those
whose shadows cast a different glow
till all that's left are memories
of ancient foe.

Beware
those who wield such senseless woe:
the hands of time
will reach right through the littered bones
of those poor souls
you didn't want to know.

8. Two lives in one

The sound of the didgeridoo
carried me
across a great divide to
another place, another time
from which I could not hide.
Beauty glowed
in the shining eyes
of an aboriginal child
whose life is borne
of the old and the new;
living proof
that two worlds
can live as one,
or two.

9. *A new hope is among us*

14 February, 2008 (on hearing Prime Minister's apology)

This nation's heart is beating
to a new and different drum,
the past a place of tragedy
reparation yet to come.

New rhythms now surround us
in a sea whose ancient shores
have stored the footprints of the past
in memory and law.

Joy abounds across the land
bringing hope for one and all,
a nation birthed in violence
may yet stand proud and tall.

10. For every human being

Deep in the soul of every human being
lies a key to infinite joy
a power gained from sharing
to build and not destroy.

Human riches are such illusive things
but once the clock of life has turned
they're gone -
that capital of Kings.

There's naught that we take with us
in the spirit's lighter mode
it's what we leave behind us
that makes a heavy load.

One life, one chance to get it right
then our journey's done;
to respect another's joy or pain
is the goal for everyone.